

**City of Alma
Planning Commission Minutes
July 12, 2021**

Chairman Ayers called the regular meeting of the Alma Planning Commission to order at 6:00 PM on July 12th, 2021, at the Alma High School Auditorium, 1500 Pine Avenue. The venue was moved due to the anticipated number of community members attending the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance to the United State of America was recited.

Ripley called Roll Call with a Verbal Confirmation

Present: Pitts, Schooley, Richter, Wheeler, Therrien, Mapes and Ayers.

Absent: None

Others Present: Aeric Ripley, City of Alma Zoning Administrator
Tony Costanzo, City of Alma City Attorney

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mapes and seconded by Pitts to approve the minutes of the June 7, 2021, Planning Commission meeting. Motion carried with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Schooley, Richter, Wheeler, Therrien, Mapes, Ayers and Pitts.

No: None

City Attorney, Tony Costanzo provided any overview of the Conditional Rezoning Process. Mr. Costanzo also went over the procedure for addressing the Planning commission during the public comment and meeting decorum.

Open Public Hearing

A motion was made by Pitts and seconded by Schooley to open the public hearing. Motion carried with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Richter, Wheeler, Therrien, Mapes, Ayers, Pitts and Schooley.

No: None

The requesting entity Michigan Masonic Home provide a brief presentation to the Planning Commission. Following the presentation Planning Commission asked questions. (Attachment #1 - Planning Commission Meeting Transcript)

The General Public was invited to speak. (Attachment #1 - Planning Commission Meeting Transcript)

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A motion was made by Schooley and supported by Therrien to close the public hearing. Motion carried with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Wheeler, Therrien, Ayers, Mapes, Pitts, Schooley and Richter.

Not: None

Chair Ayers read the three possible recommendations to provide to the Alma City Commission for their consideration regarding the conditional rezoning: recommend approval of the conditional rezoning request to the City Commission, recommend approval of the conditional rezoning request with changes to the City Commission or recommend denial of the conditional rezoning request to the City Commission. The Planning Commission may also motion to table the recommendation to consider all the comments made during the public comment.

A motion was made by Mapes and seconded by Richter to recommend approval of the conditional rezoning request from Michigan Masonic Home to the City Commission. Motion failed with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Therrien, Mapes and Richter.

No: Ayers, Pitts, Schooley, and Wheeler.

The Planning Commission is still responsible to provide a recommendation to the Alma City Commission. Chair asked for a motion from one of the remaining options.

A motion was made by Pitts to recommend denial of the conditional rezoning request from the Michigan Masonic Home to the City Commission. Motion failed for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Mapes to recommend approval with an additional condition to the conditional rezoning request to the City Commission, the conditional rezoning be in effect and allowed for three years then re-examined. Motion failed for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Schooley and seconded by Wheeler to table the recommendation to review information provided during the public comment. Motion carried with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Therrin, Ayers, Schooley, Richter and Wheeler.

No: Mapes and Pitts.

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Planning Commission discussion for a date to meet and open the tabled item. The next regular Alma Planning Commission meeting is August 2, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. The Planning Commission can also set another special meeting to open the tabled item. Costanzo stated a motion is not needed to set a special meeting, just provide notice of the special meeting date.

Other Business

No other business.

A motion was made by Wheeler and seconded by Therrien at 10:03 PM to adjourn. Motion carried with a roll call verbal vote.

Yes: Ayers, Mapes, Wheeler, Pitts, Schooley, Richter and Therrien

No: None

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aeric Ripley".

Aeric Ripley

Planning Commission Recording Secretary – 7-12-2021

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In Re: Conditional Rezoning Request
for Warwick Living Center,
842 Warwick Drive Alma, Michigan

MEETING OF CITY OF ALMA PLANNING COMMISSION
Held on the 12th day of July, 2021 at Alma High
School Auditorium, 1500 Pine Avenue Alma, Michigan at
6:00 p.m.

APPEARANCES:

Don Ayers, Chairperson
Jim Wheeler, Vice Chairperson
Heather Therrien, Secretary
Greg Mapes
Michelle Pitts
Ellen Richter
Matt Schooley
Anthony Costanzo, City Attorney

Aeric Ripley, Assistant City Manager/
Zoning Administrator

Reported by: Robin Alvis Doan, CSR 5650
Certified Shorthand Reporter
(989) 274-1982

1 Alma, Michigan

2 Monday, July 12th, 2021 - 6:00 p.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: All right. With that I'll
4 call this meeting to order and first order of business is
5 going to do roll call vote.

6 MR. RIPLEY: All right. Here we go, Pitts?

7 THE SPEAKER: Sir, are we going to do a Pledge
8 of Allegiance?

9 AUDIENCE: Yes, Yes (applause).

10 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Can we do it after the
11 roll call?

12 AUDIENCE: No, no, no.

13 MR. RIPLEY: Mr. Chair, can we get, at least
14 get our attendance taken care of then if you like to we can
15 do that no problem.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yup, yup, right after the
17 roll call.

18 AUDIENCE: No.

19 (Whereupon the Pledge of Allegiance was
20 recited.)

21 MR. RIPLEY: Back to business.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you all for that.

23 MR. RIPLEY: Commissioner Pitts?

24 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Here.

25 MR. RIPLEY: Schooley?

1 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Here.

2 MR. RIPLEY: Richter?

3 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

4 MR. RIPLEY: Wheeler?

5 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Here.

6 MR. RIPLEY: Therrien?

7 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Here.

8 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

9 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Here.

10 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Here.

12 MR. RIPLEY: Thank you, roll has been taken.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you very much.

14 First order of business or the next order of business is to
15 approve the meeting, the minutes of the last meeting held on
16 June 7th, 2021. Unless there's any changes or anything I'd
17 entertain a motion to approve.

18 COMMISSIONER MAPES: So moved.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Support?

20 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Support.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: All those in favor can say
22 aye and we'll do roll call vote on that too please.

23 MR. RIPLEY: For approval of the minutes from
24 June 7th, Schooley?

25 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Aye.

1 MR. RIPLEY: Richter?

2 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Aye.

3 MR. RIPLEY: Wheeler?

4 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Aye.

5 MR. RIPLEY: Therrien?

6 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Aye.

7 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

8 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Aye.

9 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

10 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Aye.

11 MR. RIPLEY: And Pitts?

12 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Aye.

13 MR. RIPLEY: Motion passes.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you very much. All
15 right. We are going to, I'm going to introduce Tony Costanzo
16 the City attorney. He's got some things he's going to go
17 over with us for the meeting tonight. Please be patient it's
18 going to, you need to understand some of the rules, okay?
19 Thank you. Here's Tony.

20 MR. COSTANZO: Thanks. Good evening everyone,
21 my name's Tony Costanzo I'm the City attorney. Sounds like
22 you guys are ready to get rolling, but I do want to go over a
23 couple things, all right. Because this is democracy in
24 action and I think we all should be proud, it's a huge
25 turnout that's the way it's supposed to be.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. COSTANZO: So I want this to work the way
3 it's supposed to work. So this is just the order of events.
4 As soon as I'm done and I'll be done soon I'm going to turn
5 it back over to the chairman who is going to introduce the
6 people from Bethany Christian and the Masonic Home are going
7 to give their presentation. And then once they're done the
8 Planning Commission, all the members here can comment if they
9 want to, they can ask questions if they want to.

10 When that's over it's public comment, that's why I think
11 most of you folks are here. And once the public comment is
12 over the public hearing will be closed. And then at that
13 point it's up to the Planning Commission to take whatever
14 action they deem appropriate under the circumstances. All
15 right?

16 So now this is and I'm sure most of you all know this,
17 but this is a request of Michigan Masonic Home, Bethany
18 Christian Services pursuant to what is known as a Conditional
19 Rezoning Ordinance in Alma, it's 60-382. They want to
20 conditional rezone the land currently zoned R-3 - this is on
21 warwick, this is the old Warwick Living Center - to CI which
22 is campus institutional.

23 So the process that they've done so far they filed an
24 application. They have to, they have to offer conditions
25 that they believe will encourage the Planning Commission,

1 ultimately the City Commission to approve it. That's been
2 done, they've offered these conditions the next step is
3 tonight the public hearing before the Planning Commission.

4 Planning Commission tonight can do one of four things.
5 They can approve it or excuse me they can recommend approval
6 and then it will go to the City Commission; they can
7 recommend approval with additional conditions then it would
8 be up to the Masonic Home and/or Bethany to come forward with
9 those conditions and, and go forward with that.

10 They can recommend denial or they can recommend if they
11 feel that there's more information that had to be gathered,
12 if there's questions that are asked tonight that will not be
13 answered tonight and they feel they need more time they can
14 table it if they feel it's necessary. This ultimate decision
15 by the Planning Commission once it's ultimately made it's a
16 recommendation to the City Commission.

17 One of the things that the Planning Commission has to
18 decide before they you know pass or deny this are the
19 conditions required under Ordinance 60-381 which is in the
20 Zoning Ordinance. So these are the things that the Planning
21 Commission is looking at to make a decision here ultimately.
22 So first one is whether the requested change is justified by
23 a change in conditions since the original Zoning Ordinance
24 was adopted.

25 Number two the possible precedence and possible affects

1 if, that would likely result if this is approved. Next the
2 ability of the city governmental agencies to provide
3 services, facilities and/or programs that might be required
4 if the request is approved. Next the affect of approval of
5 the request on the adopted developmental policies of the City
6 and other governmental units. And those findings will be
7 made as part of the public record when a decision is made,
8 okay.

9 All right. Now as far as the comments and questions by
10 the Planning Commission and the public comment from you folks
11 out here. I know you guys are ready to rock and roll, but I
12 want, I want you to -- hey, here's the deal. This is the
13 City of Alma we're going to take comments from anybody here.
14 I don't care where you're from we're going to listen, we're
15 going to be polite and listen. All that we ask is you give
16 your name and your place of residence, not an address just
17 where you're from and we'll listen.

18 But we've got to preserve order and decorum that's how
19 this works, we need respect for everybody. I'm not on social
20 media, I'm not on Facebook but I've heard that both sides on
21 this issue maybe have gone a little too far on Facebook.
22 This isn't Facebook this is democracy in action, all right.
23 we're counting on you.

24 There are honorable members of the Alma Police Force,
25 they are all honorable that are here just in case, but don't

1 make them have to do anything, right? They do enough, all
2 right. Okay.

3 (Applause).

4 MR. COSTANZO: All right. So no personal,
5 impertinent, slanderous remarks, that goes without saying.
6 One at a time, no interrupting when somebody's talking. I
7 understand there's going to be applause and whatever I think
8 that's probably going to have to happen, but keep it to a
9 minimum. These folks they're doing this out of the goodness
10 of their heart we got to get home too at some point. We want
11 to listen to everybody, but you know we're going to keep it,
12 keep it rolling, right.

13 Okay. You can ask questions, but this is not a question
14 and answer period because if it was that we'd have sleeping
15 bags here, we'd be here until next week. So what we're doing
16 is you can ask the question it's not going to get answered
17 tonight, but if the Planning Commission hears questions that
18 they don't believe are answered fully they certainly can ask
19 them later and they will. If that's the case they have the
20 option of tabling this. So don't think you're not being
21 heard just because you're not getting an answer tonight, but
22 that's the way this is going to work. Okay?

23 Again you guys I'm proud of the City of Alma and the
24 surrounding area. I've been here 30 some years, you guys
25 have made, made this my home and I know a lot of people in

1 here on both sides of this issue. Good people, honorable
2 people so let's keep it that way. All right? I know you
3 guys are charged up everybody is, this is an emotional issue.
4 Show respect, okay? I'm going to turn this over to
5 Mr. Ayers.

6 Oh, yeah, sorry. I can go on forever, but you guys only
7 get five minutes. I'm a lawyer I got a big mouth. We will,
8 we're going to try to keep on that though because it's
9 important. We want everybody who wants to talk the ability
10 to talk, but like I said man we'll be here until tomorrow if
11 we don't keep to five, okay?

12 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: If you get applause and
13 stuff and we need to give somebody a little extra because of
14 the applause we can do that within reason.

15 MR. COSTANZO: Okay. It's like tennis you
16 know you can yell for a little bit then the next guy's
17 getting ready to serve you got to shut-up and that's the way
18 it will work. I don't think that will be a problem I think
19 you guys will get the hang of it. All right, Mr. Ayers, the
20 floor's your's.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you, Tony, I
22 appreciate it. And welcome everybody, I expected a big crowd
23 but wow. All right. With that number five on the agenda,
24 the Public Hearing Conditional Zoning Request. Michigan
25 Masonic Home has submitted a request for a conditional

1 rezoning at 842 Warwick Drive to allow Bethany Christian
2 Services to operate an unaccompanied children's program also
3 known as the Transitional Assessment Center at the location.

4 This use is not allowed within the R-3 Multiple Family
5 District, but can be considered under the Conditional
6 Rezoning Ordinance. Included with the packet is Michigan
7 Masonic Home's conditional rezoning request and a draft of
8 the conditional rezoning agreement with closed primary and
9 additional use restrictions and site plan. Now hopefully
10 everybody's had an opportunity to get online and look at that
11 it's quite lengthy.

12 With that we have a 10 minute presentation by Michigan
13 Masonic Home and Bethany Christian Services.

14 MR. RIPLEY: Mr. Chair?

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

16 MR. RIPLEY: Could we get a motion to open
17 public hearing please with a second?

18 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I thought we were going to
19 do that after the presentation.

20 MR. RIPLEY: After the presentation?

21 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Oh, right.

22 MR. RIPLEY: We should have the --

23 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: All right. We have to
24 open the public hearing first and then -- I haven't done this
25 in awhile you can tell.

1 MR. RIPLEY: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: The public hearing is now
3 open to Bethany Christian Services and Masonic Home --

4 COMMISSIONER PITTS: I'll make a motion.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I'm sorry.

6 COMMISSIONER PITTS: I'll make a motion.

7 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Second.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Motion and support. All
9 those in favor say aye to open the hearing and then we'll do
10 a roll call.

11 MR. RIPLEY: Okay, roll call. Richter?

12 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

13 MR. RIPLEY: Wheeler?

14 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Yes.

15 MR. RIPLEY: Therrien?

16 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Yes.

17 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

18 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Yes.

19 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

20 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

21 MR. RIPLEY: Pitts?

22 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Yes.

23 MR. RIPLEY: And Schooley?

24 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Yes.

25 MR. RIPLEY: Motion passes, hearing is open.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Okay, thank you. I
2 thought usually I can open them, okay. All right. With that
3 Bethany Christian Services and Masonic has a presentation
4 they want us to observe.

5 MR. RIPLEY: Can the Planning Commission
6 please come down and sit in the front row seats here.

7 MR. MOEGGENBORG: All right. Well, thank you
8 for having us here tonight. I'll just make an introduction
9 of myself and then I'll let Mike introduce himself, but I'm
10 Todd Moeggenborg the CFO of Masonic Home.

11 MR. LOGAN: And I'm Mike Logan, CEO of
12 Michigan Masonic Home.

13 MR. MOEGGENBORG: What we want to lay out
14 tonight, obviously you got the packet for our zoning app --
15 conditional rezoning application which if I could have that,
16 I guess if you could go to the next slide. I just want to
17 lay out a couple additional pieces of information that are
18 points of interest for folks.

19 So just like I said point of reference for everybody I
20 put on here timeline of when Masonic Home bought Warwick. I
21 mean if you didn't know Masonic Home did not construct
22 Warwick. The Michigan Healthcare Associates Limited they
23 built the building and moved from the old Wilcox on State
24 Street out to where they are on Warwick Drive.

25 On December 31st of 2014 Michigan Masonic Home wound up

1 purchasing Warwick Living Center. We operated that, well,
2 you see on November 13th, 2020 the Home Board of Trustees
3 took action from, from recommendation from management to
4 begin the process of closing Warwick Living Center starting
5 January of 2021. As you're all well aware the pandemic hit
6 and we're talking March of 2020 and we continued on for you
7 know good portion of that July fiscal year. Wound up being
8 at that point in time in November we made that
9 recommendation.

10 When census declined at both locations it had obviously
11 a financial impact on operations and from a staffing
12 perspective we want to gain operation efficiency. So a
13 recommendation was made through the Board of Trustees they
14 approved that. On December 30th of 2020, you got to remember
15 it's a skilled nursing facility and it's one of the most
16 highly regulated industries in the nation.

17 So on December 30th, we just can't turn around and close
18 anything without proper notification. So the home submitted
19 closure to the Michigan Department of Licensing & Regulatory
20 Affairs, LARA. We have to give 60 day notice, at least 60
21 day notice to residents and their families which is why it
22 occurred. Last day of operations there was March 4th.

23 All the residents have a right to decide where they
24 wanted to go from there. The options were given, you know
25 laid out where you could, other alternatives or they could

1 come over to Masonic Pathways. So as of the 4th of March
2 Warwick Living Center effectively closed.

3 Shortly thereafter, April 1st we had our initial on site
4 discussion with Bethany regarding use of this site for what
5 they're looking for for transitional assessment center
6 through a mutual business contact of our's. On April 15th we
7 entered into a nonbinding commercial lease letter of intent
8 with Bethany, again nonbinding letter of intent.

9 MR. LOGAN: Thank you, Members of the City
10 Planning Commission, for this opportunity to speak with you
11 here today about the value proposition. We break down the
12 value proposition into four key components. Strong business
13 mission. Both Bethany Christian Services and Michigan
14 Masonic Home are longstanding not for profit organizations
15 with over 200 plus years of serving those vulnerable
16 populations.

17 We understand the importance of the local economy and
18 building strong jobs. We have closed the building, we had to
19 close the building because of the census and the societal
20 shifts within aging services. So bringing Bethany Christian
21 Services to Alma, Michigan will continue the momentum of
22 building strong jobs to the area estimated to be worth more
23 than 50 plus jobs to the community.

24 The economic impact is very much important. The overall
25 economic impact of bringing Bethany Christian Services will

1 strengthen the local community with individuals utilizing
2 local retail shops and local businesses and it's important
3 that we occupy an empty building.

4 we've all heard about the broken window theory. Once a
5 broken window occurs in a community then other broken windows
6 start happening and then vacant buildings start to occur. We
7 don't want another empty building in our community. Vacant
8 buildings are not good for the community or the economy.
9 Having a strong tenant will ensure the City of Alma has one
10 less vacant building within the community. Thank you.

11 MR. MOEGGENBORG: So to recap our request here
12 from the Masonic perspective it's a humanitarian effort to
13 take care of kids, kids in need. We would act as a landlord
14 Bethany will act, operate as the lessee and that's part of
15 the application. We will always be the landlord there
16 because we are part of this community Bethany will always be
17 the lessee. There won't be an option to purchase. We will
18 be the landlord for the duration of this, this conditional
19 rezoning.

20 As Mike pointed out this will strengthen the local,
21 existing local economy. As he said an unoccupied building's
22 not advantageous to anybody.

23 The proposed rent since, as Tony pointed out I don't do
24 social media either, but I've heard comments that oh, my God
25 it's a lot of money being paid for rent. Yup, the rent's

1 going to equal on an annual basis a little over \$385,000.00.
2 That's covering our principal and interest payment on the
3 building.

4 As you're all well aware if you started a business you
5 buy a business, you know the day of (inaudible) with
6 MidMichigan Health Associates they didn't give the building
7 for free to Michigan Masonic Home we had to buy it. It was
8 financed and financed for an X length of time. Well, that
9 rent is going to cover our principal and interest payment on
10 that. Obviously each succeeding year our interest expense will
11 get a little less as you pay down more on the principal, but
12 that is the recap.

13 Another portion of what I heard too just to let you
14 know, Bethany will get into this, these are federal grants
15 for Bethany to operate this. Just bear in mind that
16 operating a skilled nursing facility if you look at our 99s
17 which are public information for everybody to look at. As
18 Mike pointed out we're 501c3's there is nothing secret out
19 there. We have to issue our tax return every year and it's
20 published, if you look at Guidestar.org they're out there.

21 You'll notice that our Medicare and Medicaid revenue for
22 the last cost report, I'm sorry not cost report tax return is
23 roughly 60 percent of our total revenue. Sixty percent of
24 total revenue coming from Medicare and Medicaid that's state
25 and federally funded. So federal dollars are coming in here

1 kind of the same as what we were doing with the skilled
2 nursing facility, but it will cover our principal and
3 interest payment.

4 MS. STEVENS: Good evening. Thank you for the
5 opportunity to appear before the Commission so that I can
6 share how Bethany Christian Services proposes to care for
7 unaccompanied children here in Alma. My name is
8 Krista Stevens and I'm the, an Executive Branch Director with
9 Bethany Christian Services.

10 Bethany is an international nonprofit that believes in
11 changing the world through family. Seventy-seven years ago
12 we began our work by serving one child in Grand Rapids,
13 Michigan today we partner with churches and communities in
14 over 30 states impacting hundreds of thousands of lives every
15 year.

16 Bethany's mission as you can see on the screen is to
17 demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus by protecting
18 children, empowering youth and strengthening families through
19 quality social services. One of the ways we live out our
20 mission is by keeping unaccompanied children safe and
21 reuniting them with families.

22 Unaccompanied children flee violence, corruption,
23 trafficking and extreme poverty in search of safety
24 elsewhere. For many it truly is a life or death decision.

25 Over the last few months I and my teammates have had the

1 opportunity to get to know so many members of the Alma
2 community. We recognize the residents of Alma and Gratiot
3 County did not ask Bethany to repurpose the Warwick Living
4 Center. Many residents have attended public forums, asked
5 good questions, made phone calls and written numerous letters
6 to the editor and the City. We at Bethany truly believe that
7 Alma is a compassionate and welcoming community where people
8 recognize the dignity and the worth of every child.

9 At the same time you deserve to know that caring for
10 unaccompanied children in Alma will not put your community,
11 your families or yourselves at risk. I can assure you that
12 the safety for the community and the children is indeed our
13 highest priority.

14 Let's talk about vetting first. Immediately upon
15 crossing the border unaccompanied children are taken into the
16 custody of U.S. Customs & Border Protection where they are
17 monitored and screened by Border Patrol agents before being
18 transferred to the care and custody of the U.S. Department of
19 Health & Human Services which many of us know as DHHS.

20 The U.S. Government requires multiple forms of evidence
21 to determine the age of the child. If official government
22 issued documents are not present or if their validity is
23 questioned the child's home country is contacted. Medical
24 age assessments may also be used.

25 Background checks are performed by U.S. Government

1 agencies on every single child to determine if they pose a
2 risk to themselves or others. After the child is fully
3 vetted the U.S. Government determines the most appropriate
4 care setting based on their needs.

5 Several specialized care settings are available for
6 unaccompanied children. In Alma Bethany is proposing to open
7 a small group shelter for the short-term care of low risk
8 children.

9 Second let's talk about security. Bethany is licensed
10 by the State of Michigan and monitored by the state and
11 federal government. Anything that endangers a child, staff
12 or the community would be immediately reported to the state
13 licensing board, Child Protective Services, local law
14 enforcement and the U.S. Government. We will work alongside
15 existing community systems to help ensure the wellness of the
16 Alma community.

17 Bethany has helped reunite more than 12,000 children
18 with families since 2012. No child has ever left one of our
19 small group shelters and caused harm. If a child needs care
20 in a more secure setting Bethany will recommend to the U.S.
21 Government that he be transferred. Bethany will also have
22 security services on site; furthermore, Bethany's programs
23 are monitored by the Verkada camera systems which provide
24 around the clock security while allowing youth to be safely
25 cared for in a therapeutic environment.

1 Third let's talk about length of stay. Bethany provides
2 reunification services for every child in care typically
3 releasing the child to a family member within 45 days.
4 Bethany is able to successfully reunify a child with their
5 family 95 percent of the time. For those who are unable to
6 reunify with family Bethany has long-term care options
7 available. Bethany's proposed program for Alma is not for
8 long-term care. If a child in Alma is eligible for long-term
9 care or turns 18 before release to a sponsor or family member
10 he will be transferred out of Alma.

11 We believe Bethany's proposal is a win-win for children
12 in need and the community in Alma. More than 50 jobs will be
13 created in Alma if Bethany's proposal is approved bringing
14 significant resources into the community and supporting the
15 local economy. If Bethany's proposal is not approved the
16 Warwick Living Center could remain unoccupied.

17 This program is fully funded by the U.S. Government and
18 would cost the State of Michigan nothing.

19 (Laughter.)

20 I trust the Planning Commission has reviewed the
21 conditional rezoning request for the Warwick Living Center
22 from Bethany and the Michigan Masonic Home. The Bethany team
23 and I are happy to answer any questions that the Planning
24 Commission or the community has.

25 Before closing I'd like to share about something that

1 can easily be forgotten the children who would be cared for
2 in Alma if our rezoning request is approved because for us at
3 Bethany helping children is a moral issue.

4 I ask that for a moment you put yourself in Jose's
5 shoes. Jose grew up in El Salvador, he helped his dad farm
6 and he did well in school. While he was just 14, I'll say
7 that again when he was just 14 Jose was shot by two gang
8 members after walking out of church on a Sunday.

9 Recognizing that he was no longer safe at home Jose left
10 everything behind and fled to the U.S. He sought the
11 protection U.S. law offers him, was granted legal presence
12 and was placed in Bethany's care while his petition for
13 immigration relief was heard by a judge.

14 Unlike most of the children who would be cared for at
15 the Warwick Living Center Jose did not have family in the
16 U.S. who would care for him. But he was able to enter one of
17 Bethany's long-term care programs and his petition for
18 immigration relief was approved. Today Jose is preparing to
19 graduate from a Christian university in West Michigan. He
20 has already been accepted into the Michigan Police Academy
21 and will be soon protecting Michigan communities by serving
22 in law enforcement.

23 These children want what every child wants to reunite
24 with a family member who is already living in the U.S. where
25 they will be safe and out of harm's way. All children, my

1 children, your children, these children no matter where they
2 are from or what they have been through deserve to be treated
3 with dignity and respect.

4 Bethany believes children belong in small scale settings
5 of care that can best attend to these unique needs. They
6 have experienced trauma that no human much less a child
7 should endure. Rezoning the Warwick Living Center would
8 allow us to achieve our goal and provide these hurting
9 children with the care they need.

10 We're grateful to the Planning Commission for
11 considering our request and we welcome the opportunity to
12 answer your questions. Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you very much for
15 that. Thank you very much for that. Just want to remind
16 everybody please be polite and let them talk. It didn't get
17 too bad there, but try to keep it down, okay. I'm going to
18 start it off with my first question and then I'll pass the
19 mic to anybody else that has one. I just have to find it
20 here, I wrote it down.

21 An article that was in the paper July 9th, 2021 in the
22 Morning Sun, it's an Associated Press, I'm questioning the
23 need for this. Hundreds of transitional foster care beds at
24 family homes and small group facilities are not being used
25 according to government data. Four providers told the

1 Associated Press that they have licensed foster families
2 ready to take children. Two providers said about a third of
3 available beds over the past month are not used. The others
4 declined to specify that.

5 But it says not just foster families, but transitional
6 homes like what you have. And they're saying that there
7 isn't, they aren't filling the beds so is there really a
8 need?

9 MS. STEVENS: Sure, I'm happy to answer that
10 question. If the Commission will permit can I have my
11 colleagues introduce themselves as well for the record
12 because they're going to kind of be the panel answering
13 questions. Is that allowable just before I answer that
14 question?

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I don't see any reason why
16 not.

17 MS. STEVENS: Good.

18 MS. OROZCO: Good evening and thanks for
19 having us, my name is Hannah Orozco I'm the National Director
20 for our Refugee Children's Programs.

21 MR. ZIOMKOWSKI: My name is Lukas Ziomkowski
22 I'm the National Director for Residential Group Care Programs
23 for Refugee & Human Services. Thanks for having us.

24 MS. STEVENS: And once again I'm
25 Krista Stevens an Executive Branch Director with Bethany. So

1 that's a very valid question, happy to answer it. We have
2 the, what we are proposing in Alma is a short-term shelter
3 which is slightly different than what's in that article, a
4 transitional foster home.

5 So in Michigan, in the nation there is domestic foster
6 care and there's refugee and immigration foster care which is
7 what we call transitional foster care. So just like we would
8 recruit families for domestic children who are being removed
9 by the CPS, by the State of Michigan we also try and find
10 families that are a good fit for unaccompanied minors which
11 is the same population that we're trying to serve with this
12 short-term shelter.

13 So what's referenced in that article are the actual
14 foster families. And because it's voluntary because of how
15 the law is set up those families are allowed to set criteria
16 on what they are or are not opened to. Let me give you an
17 example. Some are empty nesters, they don't have any kids at
18 home and they're okay with having the schedule to shuttle
19 kids to and from school. So therefore they're not really
20 interested in taking younger kids, not a good fit for them
21 they'll take older, school aged kids.

22 So for that reason you may see an influx at the border
23 of younger children. The families that we have approved
24 wouldn't be a good fit for that situation because they
25 clearly told us we are open to this, we are approved for this

1 and their licensing process reflects that.

2 The shelter is different in a sense that we're approved
3 to be open to low risk youth between the ages of 12 and 17,
4 so it's a little bit different process if you will. So
5 depending on who's coming through the border and who's able
6 to take those children that dictates the capacity or the
7 ceiling on that.

8 COMMISSIONER: I just have one question too on
9 that. I have a loud enough voice I'm good, thank you.

10 MR. COSTANZO: You sure?

11 COMMISSIONER: Yup, yup. I'm sure everybody
12 can hear me. But my question is does Bethany Services help
13 the foster children of Michigan or is it just international?
14 Do you have set or a group that helps foster children in the
15 State of Michigan?

16 MS. STEVENS: Yes we do. Across the State of
17 Michigan and that would be domestic.

18 COMMISSIONER: Do you have homes that you're
19 proposing for Michigan kids?

20 MS. STEVENS: We do, but the need is greater
21 than that which is why we continue to have discussions about
22 the short-term shelters.

23 COMMISSIONER: So there could be short-term
24 for Michigan children, do you offer those homes?

25 MS. STEVENS: Yes.

1 COMMISSIONER: Do you have those homes
2 throughout Michigan?

3 MS. STEVENS: Yes, we have --

4 COMMISSIONER: For Michigan children?

5 MS. STEVENS: Yes, we have them in other
6 Michigan locations.

7 COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you.

8 MS. STEVENS: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER: And those are funded how, these
10 all come through the same funding source?

11 MS. STEVENS: Yes. So the transitional foster
12 care program and the proposed short-term shelter that serves
13 the same population the funding source is the same which is
14 the federal government.

15 THE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: This is only for the
17 Planning Commission to ask questions. It's okay, thanks.
18 Anybody else?

19 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Hello, everyone. I guess
20 first in the interest of transparency I'd like for everyone
21 to know and many of you already know I'm sure, but I am also,
22 my name's Greg Mapes I'm also serving as the Mayor of the
23 City of Alma and I have been a Mason for pretty close to 40
24 years now. Second generation in the City of Alma Mason, so
25 very proud of my affiliation there. But I do come to these

1 meetings with an open mind and so therefore I'm going to ask
2 a couple questions of you if I could.

3 Many of the communications that we've received from the
4 public, you know we've gotten a lot of letters and phone
5 calls and questions on the street, refer to the children that
6 you're proposing to bring to our community as illegal
7 immigrants. Could you address what the status of these, are
8 these indeed illegal immigrants?

9 MS. STEVENS: Sure, we'd be happy to clarify
10 that. I'll actually defer to Hannah for the details, but I
11 want to clarify that there's a difference between a legal,
12 legal presence and so that's an important term to know. In
13 terms of these children who are coming across the border
14 unaccompanied according to the United States of America laws
15 has something called legal presence which means they are
16 under our laws legally able to be here. So I'll have you
17 explain that, Hannah.

18 MS. OROZCO: Krista's exactly right,
19 unaccompanied children have legal presence in the United
20 States. According to our immigration laws children not only
21 are encouraged, but they're mandated to have access to this
22 type of programming to ensure safety. That they're not
23 immediately retreated back to their home country in the
24 situations that they came from, to ensure that they're not
25 put back in unsafe situations.

1 So our laws in the United States mandate that
2 unaccompanied children even though if they enter and are
3 caught or apprehended that they have access to due process.
4 That they have the ability to go in front of a judge to plead
5 their case as to why they need refuge here in the United
6 States.

7 So these programs allow for them to receive immediate
8 safety and care, to be placed with their family members until
9 they're able to go through that entire legal process. So no
10 they are not illegal they have a legal presence here in the
11 United States.

12 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Okay. Just to clarify in
13 simple layman's terms then it appears to me that these
14 children are wards of the United States Government which is
15 why they report to them and the funding comes from the
16 government?

17 MS. OROZCO: Correct, they're in federal
18 custody.

19 COMMISSIONER MAPES: They are in federal
20 custody?

21 MS. OROZCO: Correct.

22 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Okay, thank you. And the
23 next question that came to my mind or I've heard a number of
24 times and perhaps this really may be more for Masonic to
25 address to, I see Todd, Mike's still over there. A number of

1 communications we received also ask the question of you know
2 why this program, why aren't you, why isn't the veterans
3 program or a, a local community center coming in here.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. MOEGGENBORG: As the timeline showed
6 earlier in our presentation and the facility was closed March
7 4th and through a mutual business contact Bethany reached out
8 to us we had some discussion. So as Masonic Home we're not
9 at all opposed to anything being used at that facility except
10 for another competitor. Which if you think about it we
11 wouldn't want another nursing facility four or five blocks
12 from us.

13 So to answer your question sure we're open to that. Did
14 anybody approach us to use the facility as such that would be
15 no. Bethany did, so we started talking with them. After our
16 discussion with them knowing what a great organization they
17 are and what kind of program they were looking at providing
18 you know it fit that humanitarian effort on our part, so.

19 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Okay, thank you. So
20 basically again to simplify what you just told me and make
21 sure I understand you correctly. No one else is coming
22 forward proposing any other uses for this vacant facility, is
23 that true?

24 MR. MOEGGENBORG: We've had another discussion
25 with another, another big nonprofit the hospital regarding

1 children mental health aspect.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. MOEGGENBORG: You know it's not, when you
4 look at the facility it's a great facility, I think from
5 their angle it would take a huge investment on their end,
6 that's what we were informed. But it was an initial
7 discussion it went no further than that. So having contacted
8 folks absolutely Bethany was the one that showed interest, so
9 this is where we are.

10 COMMISSIONER MAPES: And I don't want to speak
11 for the hospital, but my understanding is they're talking
12 about and we know from this commission and previous meetings
13 they're talking about tearing some buildings down on their
14 current campus, they've got excess facilities.

15 THE SPEAKER: They're building a new OR.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Anybody else got any other
17 questions?

18 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Thank you. Maybe it's
19 my background, but the one I hear frequently from people is
20 about security and those items. And I guess I asked awhile
21 back and I guess you put some of the information of your
22 mandates and things, but explain for the folks here I think
23 and for us especially on the commission the process.

24 There's a couple different things I think, there's a
25 major fear of somebody leaving that's not what I'm referring

1 to. How do you deal with things internally that happen
2 inside the facility, are those reported to local police or
3 are those somehow taken care of through the federal
4 government?

5 MR. ZIOMKOWSKI: Yeah, that's a great question
6 thank you for raising that. So this, this program is
7 monitored on multiple levels one of which is by the State of
8 Michigan MDHHS through the Division of Child welfare
9 Licensing, so it is licensed as a child care institution.
10 Because of that we have to go through a full licensing
11 process where they review all of our programming, our
12 policies and procedures and practices to ensure it meets
13 State of Michigan standards.

14 And then as a result of that process they do quarterly
15 unannounced monitoring visits to the site where they review
16 files, they talk to staff and talk to youth as it relates to
17 things that are going on in there. There are a comprehensive
18 list of situations that we would report to the State of
19 Michigan as they occur. So we're in close contact with the
20 licensing consultant through the State of Michigan.

21 On an additional level the contract is monitored by the
22 Youth & Information Refugee Services also known as the YRS.
23 So they oversee our overall general compliance from a federal
24 standpoint within the programs. And that includes, that
25 includes monitoring including on site monitoring and then the

1 additional level would be through the federal government the
2 Office of Refugee Resettlement. Where they provide both on
3 site as well as what we refer to as desk monitoring.

4 And there is a stipulation at this point it's within
5 four hours that a significant incident report is reported to
6 the federal government for you know really down to a, if an
7 individual cuts their finger. It's pretty comprehensive in
8 terms of what we report to the federal government as well as
9 to the state of Michigan.

10 So it has various levels of monitoring in addition to
11 our own internal monitoring that occurs from Bethany
12 headquarters. Based off of our experience with other
13 programs that are similar we have on site presence as well as
14 through again the desk monitoring process, quality assurance
15 process to ensure the programs are meeting the standards of
16 care that we need them to.

17 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: So we're dealing
18 mostly with standard of care and monitoring. I'm talking you
19 have an assault, you have something and I'm just, I'm looking
20 from a local perspective then this would not be an issue for
21 locals to then get involved this would be reported through
22 the other means?

23 MR. ZIOMKOWSKI: It would be reported through
24 the other means. There is at a state level something -- at
25 certain levels we would also contact the police to inform

1 them, but mostly issues --

2 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Mostly handled through
3 other, okay.

4 MR. ZIOMKOWSKI: Yeah. And through the other
5 entities, correct.

6 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Thank you.

7 MS. STEVENS: Just to elaborate a little bit,
8 elaborate on the in building security. So that was
9 referenced briefly in the opening statement. There is
10 security cameras inside the building, that is a requirement
11 and we're held to those rules, laws and policies. But each
12 door is alarmed, so meaning if a child were to exit every
13 staff member including those like in authority who aren't on
14 site would also be alerted of that so that they knew if
15 anybody was exiting the building.

16 This building is considered least restrictive, it is not
17 a jail for the children. These are low risk children, the
18 City of Alma has on their website, I checked and looked at it
19 today. It was part of our application with the Masonic team.
20 Speaking to that a little bit, elaborating on that a little
21 bit.

22 But if a child were to exit we would notify immediately
23 local law enforcement and if we couldn't get the child back
24 in the building ourselves we would work collaboratively with
25 them.

1 Earlier the question was asked do we have other
2 facilities like this or other programs like this in Michigan
3 we do in west Michigan. That facility has been around for
4 eight years and we've only had a child leave once. That
5 child did not leave because they did not feel they were safe
6 or were fleeing anything from inside the building they were
7 leaving because they thought that their family member left or
8 lived nearby.

9 So they were leaving to go find that family member and
10 we did work with local entities to return that child.
11 Otherwise commonly held statements by that community is that
12 they did not know we were present in the community because it
13 is so contained.

14 I'll add that because we are trying to protect the
15 children the community, the external doors are locked to the
16 community. So not anybody can just enter the building you
17 would have to have gone through the security and background
18 check process as would be true of every staff member.

19 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Thank you. If I could
20 add what I would like to impart to you is we've made calls,
21 we've tried to talk with local officials and a lot of you
22 have asked that question and so we've done that. In my
23 experience it's not the best when I hear we never have a call
24 there because it's hard to understand that.

25 That, but with the conversation we just had it would be

1 so much more helpful if that was done right away because it
2 does throw up red flags that maybe are not necessary, so.
3 Thank you for that information I appreciate it.

4 MS. STEVENS: Absolutely.

5 COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Under the program
6 services that all our funded state licensed programs must
7 include, have medical here. Have you spoken, one of the
8 concerns that has been raised is whether or not our medical
9 community here has the capacity to absorb providing services
10 to these children. Have you spoken to the medical community
11 here, what was the outcome and can you walk me through or
12 walk us through what that looks like when a child comes
13 across the border and then is taken into custody and comes
14 here for medical provision?

15 MS. STEVENS: Sure, absolutely. So one of
16 the, one of the needs of every child is the medical aspect,
17 right? That's something that we are required to assess, get
18 a baseline on. Sometimes those children are assessed
19 medically or cleared medically before they come into our care
20 sometimes they're not. Regardless we would be working with
21 medical entities in the community.

22 To answer your question directly yes we have met with
23 some medical community members and we have received full
24 support to date. One of our concerns also is the same as
25 what was just vocalized in that can the community meet that

1 need. Because just like we want to be equipped to be in the
2 community and administer back to Alma we also want to be able
3 to meet the kids needs, that's our first priority.

4 So that was also a question we asked right away and the
5 answer was from the community members that we asked yes they
6 can meet that need. We gave them estimations, we gave them
7 worse case scenarios, we gave them timeframes, we gave them
8 billing information and how all of that would work. And the
9 answer was still yes that they would collaborate with us and
10 were happy to do that.

11 COMMISSIONER: Okay. Couple questions that
12 were asked to me are directed to Masonic Home. So does the
13 Masonic Home have, they're for the nonprofit and they work
14 with children you know with the programs that they have. Do
15 they have any homes in Michigan like this that are for the
16 children of Michigan that they sponsor?

17 MR. LOGAN: We do not.

18 COMMISSIONER: Okay. But you do have programs
19 that do help the children too, right? Like is it the
20 Rainbow Sisters, Rainbow --

21 MR. LOGAN: Part of our fraternal --

22 COMMISSIONER: I'm sorry I can't --

23 MR. LOGAN: Part of our fraternal organization
24 includes a youth program for young men, young boys and girls
25 it's Rainbow Girls and Job's Daughters and DOA and they're

1 part of our fraternal system.

2 COMMISSIONER: But there's no homes that you
3 offer, correct?

4 MR. LOGAN: No.

5 COMMISSIONER: Okay. I was just asked that
6 and I didn't know the answer, so I just wanted to ask. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: You got another question?

9 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Yeah, another one came to
10 mind. And, Mr. Moeggenborg, during your presentation I
11 believe you stated that Masonic Pathways would continue to
12 own the facility. Did you, and without going back through
13 this I forget, but did you stipulate in the conditional
14 rezoning that it would, the conditional zoning would only
15 continue if you continued to own the facility?

16 MR. MOEGGENBORG: Correct.

17 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Okay. So that is in
18 there?

19 MR. MOEGGENBORG: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Perfect, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Getting back to the
22 vetting. We see news reports all the time on TV you know how
23 they are, interviews with Border Patrol, interviews with
24 people that work in the detention centers at the border. The
25 timeframe that these kids have to be out of there they're

1 saying that there's actually no way that they can vet all
2 these kids before they're distributed to maybe people like
3 you or others. Can you elaborate a little more on that
4 because you know we keep hearing that there's so many of them
5 there's no way that the kids can be vetted properly before
6 they're disbursed across the country I guess would be the way
7 to word it.

8 MS. STEVENS: Sure, sure and that's a valid
9 question. I would say there's a multi step process to that
10 it's not on just one particular person or entity to
11 participate in the vetting process. But again I'll defer to
12 Hannah on that.

13 MS. OROZCO: Often what we hear about in the
14 media is regarding the 48 to 72 hours that children are
15 required to be placed in the child care facilities. That
16 stipulation, the 48 to 72 hours, two to three days that comes
17 from a piece of legislation that was brought about because of
18 litigation against or because of a group of children that
19 were cared for improperly.

20 All that says is that these kids are in custody of DHS,
21 Homeland Security with CPS and ICE for two to three days and
22 then must be placed in a child friendly facility within that
23 timeframe. So during that time they're assessed according to
24 where they come from, their medical status and then they make
25 a determination of where to refer them, to which programs

1 according to their level of security.

2 At that time then we receive those referrals and place
3 them into the most appropriate care setting. And so lowest
4 risk into the least restrictive and higher needs into more
5 secure programs.

6 MS. STEVENS: So just to add to that too I
7 can't really emphasize enough the staff that are trained in
8 our facilities before they get to us as well as when they're
9 in the facility. And so they go through rigorous training,
10 trauma training, they bring assessment skills before they're
11 even hired and so we're assessing in an ongoing way as well.

12 And this was again briefly mentioned in the opening
13 statement if a child were to ever exhibit higher needs that
14 we cannot meet we would immediately put forth a
15 recommendation to transfer them out if you will. And that
16 would not be Alma because there's no facility equipped to
17 accommodate them.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I don't know if that
19 satisfies the people that wrote some of these questions out
20 here, but I just wanted to, about the Border Patrol and all
21 that saying there's no way that they could possibly be vetted
22 properly before they're disbursed. You guys don't know
23 anything about that?

24 That, I mean how do you know the children that you're
25 getting have been vetted, vetted for some kind of trauma,

1 gang membership anything like that? I mean can, do you know
2 when you get them for sure or do you have to do a lot of
3 evaluation yourself to see whether they need to be moved out?

4 MS. OROZCO: I mean that's the purpose of our
5 program is to provide assessment for what are the needs of
6 this child. So yes there is some inner program transfers
7 according to their level of needs. But there are a lot of
8 kids who end up spending a lot longer than 72 hours
9 unfortunately in CDP custody. But there is a certain list of
10 criteria, so gang affiliation that is an automatic to a
11 certain level of restriction of programming, so a certain
12 level of criteria.

13 If kids are referencing the need for safety or fleeing
14 violence, we're talking about kids that don't want to be in
15 gangs they're trying to flee them. So those are kids that
16 want to come into our programs that are perfect for our least
17 restrictive setting in a low risk community.

18 MR. ZIOMKOWSKI: Any new information that
19 would, any new information that would come during any of our
20 assessment processes would be immediately reported to the
21 federal government.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you. Anyone else on
23 the Planning Commission got questions before we open it up to
24 the public? All right. With that thank you very much.

25 MS. STEVENS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: And like Tony said please
2 one at a time and be polite. You have five minutes and
3 Aeric's going to get the clock set up up here. There's a
4 clock on the monitor up there that hopefully you can see from
5 the, from the microphone. I can see a little bit here and
6 we'll give you a one minute warning and try to limit it to
7 five minutes.

8 So who's first? Come up to the mic. Don't get too long
9 of a line, but two or three people at a time be all right and
10 your name and your city please.

11 MS. DANIELS: Good evening, my name is
12 Norma Daniels and I am a (inaudible) and a new small business
13 owner in Downtown Alma since Summer of 2020. I stand before
14 you to declare my wholehearted support for the proposed
15 rezoning of the Warwick Living Center for the purposes that
16 have been well documented and presented here tonight by both
17 Masonic Pathways and Bethany Christian Services.

18 I educated myself on the details of this simple and
19 clear, clear rezoning request as I know you all have. It is
20 in my, it is my humble view that all of the well crafted
21 letters of support already submitted to local papers, sent to
22 you personally and posted online have quite effectively
23 gutted the politically framed misinformation campaign that
24 has sadly infected this process.

25 I'm aware that there is little I can personally add of

1 substance to the argument in support of this rezoning other
2 than to possibly state this. I took a great leap of faith in
3 early 2020 to proceed in the midst of a pandemic with the
4 creation of a new small business here in Alma that has at its
5 core the deep belief in the power of the written word to
6 inspire growth and change as well as the mission committed to
7 community building and inclusivity.

8 I chose to put even deeper roots down in this place, in
9 Alma when I was at a transition point in my life and could
10 have chosen any other direction entirely. Had I had an
11 inkling at that time that it was at all possible for this
12 community to be so unjustifiably unwelcoming I never would
13 have stayed. I would have invested my time, my energy and my
14 business elsewhere.

15 I strongly encourage you to consider the message that
16 will be sent about the community of Alma if you choose not to
17 approve this wholly valid and legal proposal for rezoning.
18 Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. EVANS: Now I basically just have some
21 questions, but --

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Your name please.

23 MS. EVANS: Oh, I'm sorry Ann Evans I live
24 here in town. I have feelings that these people are coming
25 in illegally, so my question is (applause) why, then why do

1 we have laws that state you come in legally, do it the proper
2 way. I'm sorry that they're kids, but (applause), but my
3 question's they're talking about these children coming I want
4 to know what ages they're going to be, I want to know do they
5 know absolutely positive they're not members of the M13
6 gangs, the cartels that deal in sex trafficking all this
7 other stuff (applause).

8 And I'd like to know as for sure, my husband's a retired
9 corrections officer are they going to put Constantine wire
10 around this because I want to know they're not going to be
11 able to get out into the community. Because if you look at
12 the news and the people who are living in Texas, Arizona,
13 New Mexico they have houses being broke into, guns being
14 stolen things happening. Is this what we want for our town,
15 no thank you. This is a small community (applause).

16 I've had to call the police for help in the neighborhood
17 it takes them forever to get there. So we don't have the
18 manpower police wise in this community as far as I'm
19 concerned to handle this issue.

20 And I want, they talk about vetting are they making sure
21 that these kids are not gang members because they start them
22 at an extremely unbelievable young age of eight, nine, 10
23 years old these kids are indoctrinated into gangs (applause).
24 So I would like to know -- and most of the time when you
25 listen to the government they are so slow in processing

1 things or getting there to help you that I'm like yeah, sure.

2 So that's a lot of questions I would love to have
3 answered by these people because they don't even begin to
4 touch on this stuff that people -- because this is a
5 wonderful small community. If I wanted to live in a big town
6 and have to worry about having my doors locked all the time
7 I'd move to Detroit, but I live in Alma.

8 I grew up out in Riverdale my parents never locked the
9 door, we didn't lock the door unless we went on vacation. I
10 don't want that kind of situation here where I have to lock
11 my door every time I turn around because you got to worry
12 about what's happening. It's bad enough as it is we don't
13 need gang members here because I can't trust Michigan to do
14 something about it.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. BROWN: My name's Kelle Brown I live in
17 St. Louis. It's with a heavy heart that I even got involved
18 with this because I know Jesus loves everybody. He laid it
19 on my heart to pray for these children. It's really bad, but
20 I researched statistics. I tried to find facts and
21 statistics and I hope that will spur you guys on to dig
22 deeper because this is just like really astounding.

23 There's 428,000 children in foster in the United States.
24 Michigan has approximately 13,000 in foster care due to abuse
25 and neglect, that does not count the ones that were

1 relinquished by birth parents. Many of them, this comes from
2 a focus on the family that has an orphanage, they try to do
3 orphanage, Icareaboutorphans.com. And they say many of them
4 relinquish or languish for years in institutions only to age
5 out and be cut loose on the streets, many become homeless.

6 The males outnumber the females. Expenditures for
7 these foster cares run 4.3 billion a year for administration
8 costs and that's just for placements and, excuse me I'm sorry
9 that's for, just for placement and monitoring that is not the
10 physical and mental costs.

11 Thousands of children born in this country live in the
12 state of what is called, they refer to as CUTS, Chronic
13 Unpredictable Toxic Stress. And with that they experience
14 chronic disease, mental illness, cognitive impairment,
15 relationship failures, high risk behavior, disabilities that
16 can even add up to early death.

17 As God willing they do foster or get adopted then
18 they're into the system. And the strain on that and on the
19 community in budget sense there's school systems, the health
20 care systems, incarceration systems, welfare systems. And so
21 I just wanted you to keep in mind the need is great here.

22 Our Michigan children continue (applause), our Michigan
23 children continue to spend unnecessary time in residential
24 shelters due to the lack of foster placement. They
25 experience multiple placements and moves because of the lack

1 of homes which there's a good match. They experience greater
2 uncertainty, increased trauma, poor outcome as a result of
3 the multiple moves. They're more frequently separated from
4 siblings because of the lack of homes that can take on
5 multiple children. Again the need is great in Michigan.

6 I'm for immigration, I want it done by the law
7 (applause) and properly. Let it be safe for the immigrants
8 and the community that they choose to settle in and become
9 taxpaying productive citizens and have them learn to have a
10 love and want of love for our great nation. What's happening
11 now and how it's being done is not good for them or us. I
12 see (applause), I see exploitation of these children at every
13 turn.

14 Adoption agencies they make millions, so and I think
15 Bethany Christian could take the taxpayer money and possibly
16 go further and their money will go further, it would be safer
17 for all involved go to these countries, build there, heal.
18 work (applause), work with the community and the families how
19 much better that would be.

20 From 2010 to 2019 wellspring Lutheran Services had a 30
21 percent decrease in children entering foster and it was
22 because the state and Lutheran wellspring concentrated on
23 family efforts and community efforts. So they were able to
24 keep these kids with the family, supporting and lifting that
25 up.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thirty seconds.

2 MS. BROWN: Oh, okay. Families of these
3 children they should stay there, they can reside, live and
4 reside and then keep their children. It's called missionary
5 work (applause) to provide in the communities. In doing so
6 they stay with their family, their communities, where they
7 were born, where they were raised, their cultures, their
8 beliefs. They are given the tools to be sufficient and
9 therefore promoting emotionally and intellectually sound
10 human beings. Plain and simple it works, it works for
11 families, communities and countries.

12 It is mine and your duty to research these facts and the
13 impact it will have for all of us here in Gratiot, state and
14 country. I say again you find the need is great right here.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

16 MS. BROWN: So I, Kelly Brown oppose this
17 rezoning.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. SMITH: Thank you for having us by the
20 way. Jeff Smith, Dr. Jeff Smith I live in Alma, Arcada
21 Township actually. I have lived in this community for about
22 27 years, my wife and I moved here then. It's been a
23 wonderful community. It's been a community whether you're
24 Republican, Democrat, Christian, non-Christian we have got
25 along. This is a sad moment for me and I would like to say

1 Masonic did something in two months that I never thought
2 would happen, split this community right down the middle
3 (applause).

4 And so I don't really want to speak about the politics I
5 really want to speak about why we're here. And in my mind
6 we're here for you all to really look at three things; number
7 one, in my mind there should be a very high bar to change
8 zoning. Businesses depend on zoning, Warwick Avenue as you
9 all know that, that's been going on for about 15 years trying
10 to develop businesses there. Businesses have been there,
11 businesses are, are counting on you to not rezone this
12 because of a swamp or because of politics or because of
13 someone's moral thoughts that something should be done. So I
14 just hope you keep that in mind and, and I hope that is a big
15 deal in, in this.

16 Secondly there should be overwhelming support from a
17 community to bring in such a divisive thing or you will truly
18 split this community right down the middle (applause). Now,
19 thirdly I believe that this Commission, City Council works
20 for the cit -- works for the citizens of Alma. And you're,
21 and you're, and I hope when you make this decision it is
22 based on one thing what is best for Alma not what is best for
23 me or Mexico or Democrats or Republicans. What is best to
24 develop business, develop schools, have a safe community in
25 Alma period (applause).

1 So I'd just like to talk about in my mind how I think we
2 all got here. Number one Masonic Home made a terrible
3 business decision by completely overpaying (applause) for a
4 building and this is a well known fact, okay. I don't think
5 it's our job to help them out. I think (applause) so thus,
6 so thus they partnered with Bethany to, to now say we need
7 you to change the local zoning because it's the moral thing
8 to do and we're just such wonderful..., no. Follow the
9 money, okay (applause).

10 I am not going to be told I am morally bad by people who
11 are, who will make millions of dollars on a deal (applause)
12 and they're telling me that by some moral grounds I need to
13 do it. And by the way I have a lot of experience helping
14 third world countries. We started our own 501C about 12
15 years ago (applause) (inaudible) Africa. We have, I have
16 personally been there eight times. I've done hundreds of
17 surgeries, we started an orphanage, we started a hospital, so
18 don't lecture me about what's morally right (applause).

19 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: You're cutting into his
20 time here guys.

21 MR. SMITH: Masonic Home had many, did have
22 options for this, for this property and I'm glad they finally
23 kind of hinted to that. As Chief of Staff at the hospital I
24 wasn't going to mention the hospital tonight, but they did.
25 I was personally in meetings when I know the hospital was

1 very interested in having further discussions with that
2 building and that is the truth and I would put my hand on a
3 Bible and say it (applause).

4 And I will also say, Mayor, that we don't have excess
5 capacity at the hospital those buildings are being brought
6 down to expand the hospital which I've been in many of those
7 meetings as well. And then I think there's probably going to
8 be a need for senior residency --

9 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Can you wrap it up
10 quicker.

11 MR. SMITH: Okay. So I have some questions
12 for the committee if I can just hand these out to you guys.
13 I'm sorry can you give me two more minutes please, please?

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. COSTANZO: Hey, hey folks, but this is
16 what we're talking about. And we do appreciate, this guy's
17 dynamic, I know him, I know him real well, but that's what
18 happens though. We're trying to move this along. We
19 appreciate what everybody thinks and how they're feeling, but
20 the --

21 MR. SMITH: Two minutes, Tony.

22 MR. COSTANZO: The process is shorter then --

23 THE SPEAKER: Let him talk.

24 MR. COSTANZO: We mentioned before so I'll
25 give him some time, but that's what we're talking about,

1 okay.

2 MR. SMITH: Thank you very much, Tony. So
3 question number one define vetted, okay. And that has been
4 discussed. Are they vetted, do they have a birth
5 certificate, do they have a government record, hold a TB,
6 etcetera. And I think clearly it is a half truth to say
7 these boys are vetted. Two, can you guarantee that Bethany's
8 safety plans for a full facility is sound and will protect
9 us. Three, question three have you asked Masonic Home what
10 other options they chose not to pursue.

11 Four, what is the projected need for senior living beds
12 in this county in the next 10 years. Five, is it normal for
13 a nonprofit 501C to aggressively solicit support in this
14 community through churches and others. Number six what is,
15 what is the projected strain on our budget, police, etcetera.
16 Seven, do any of the Planning Commission members have ties to
17 Masonic Home and, Greg, thank you for saying that.

18 Eight, does the CO of Masonic or Bethany live here;
19 nine, what is the bar for rezoning and what should it be.
20 Ten, what precedence would rezoning this start; 11, do you
21 agree that the primary responsibility is to do what's best
22 for the citizens of Alma period. Twelve or excuse me, yeah
23 12, is this project an obvious huge plus for this community
24 and if your answer is yes please explain. Thirteen, will
25 this center encourage or discourage further businesses from

1 coming to Alma.

2 Next and last what Alma citizens and businesses will,
3 will benefit from this other than the Masonic Home and their
4 bottom line. So in summary, closing is this good for Alma
5 no; would we as a community pursue this without Masonic. In
6 other words would we have been out looking for this, boy this
7 is a great way to just make Alma a better community. And
8 then lastly save the moral high ground, Masonic, because you
9 have none. Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. ESPINOZA: My name's (inaudible) Espinoza
12 (inaudible) you can tell from my accent I am an immigrant.
13 I've been in this community for 20 years. I'm here in
14 support of rezoning the Warwick Living Center for the
15 decision of foster home for the use of immigrants and
16 unaccompanied minors. These minors are here fleeing
17 violence, poverty, drugs they are here not because they want
18 to be here they cannot be sent back.

19 I believe Alma is a welcoming community. And I can see
20 me and the other people in our area will always protect and
21 serve all the children in our community without distinction
22 of color, race or nationality.

23 I have two children of my own and me and my family live
24 less than five minutes from the Warwick Living Center. My
25 work, my business is also down the road from the site. After

1 listening to the proposal I do not have any safety concerns
2 of this project. I don't see these children overwhelming our
3 services. I believe we have enough resources to take care of
4 our children and these immigrant children seeking asylum.

5 Closing our doors to these children due to fear and
6 misunderstanding would only send the wrong message to other
7 people, to other immigrants like me or other people that
8 would like to live in our community. Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. MOEGGENBORG: Can you hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

12 MS. MOEGGENBORG: My name's (inaudible)

13 Moeggenborg, I'm from Mt. Pleasant. I want to say thank you
14 to all of you. This is not my direct community, but I can
15 imagine your job right now is extremely hard. I did not come
16 with something prepared, so I'm speaking a little bit from
17 the heart.

18 The first thing that I want to say money can be evil.
19 These are two great speakers to follow, but the one
20 previously talked about money and the division in the
21 community. And I see so much division everywhere happening
22 right now, it's in Alma, it's in Mt. Pleasant. And when a
23 community divides nothing, nothing is going to happen that's
24 going to move that community forward.

25 Todd Moeggenborg, I don't know if we're related or not

1 if we are I'm still going to let you know that mental health
2 in Michigan right now is declining. And if you had an
3 opportunity as a human being to pursue a mental health
4 facility for children that would have been a really great
5 welcomed thing (applause).

6 I also just want to let you know a few points that I
7 wrote down to make sure that you pick up on those as well.
8 This is the same adoption agency that just stated 95 percent
9 of the time placement is made which maybe they were referring
10 to domestic children when they said that. Because then they
11 just turned around and they said children in this case are
12 not illegal immigrants, but they are granted legal presence
13 in the United States and are not immediately put back to
14 countries, they are not immediately put back to countries.

15 And that gives them time to go through the legal process
16 to plead their case so that they can find a way to be here.
17 So it can't be both ways and I think we just got both of
18 those stated to us by Bethany Christian Services.

19 Also it was touched upon by one of you up here with
20 questions about assault, so if assault happens in a facility
21 we would have to contact the police. And Bethany Christian
22 Services had said that this is all federally funded none of
23 this is federal or funded by the State of Michigan. But I'm
24 just asking you if we have to contact the police is that
25 funded for federally when those police are contacted.

1 Furthermore I'm a child care provider, I've worked with
2 children for years and years and years. And I know the State
3 of Michigan licensing system, I know how it works. Bethany
4 Christian Services said that they will go through the State
5 of Michigan and they have to be licensed through the License
6 & Regulatory Affairs which all licensed State of Michigan
7 providers have to. If you're not aware the federal
8 government doesn't pay for that, so a lot of what happens is
9 going to come from taxpayer dollars and would have to go
10 through the Licensing Regulatory Affairs of the State of
11 Michigan (applause).

12 Now, this is a little more personal. A few years ago I
13 actually went through Bethany Christian Services and I was
14 adopting a teenager. And that teenager was placed with me
15 based on the child's request. I had known the child, the
16 child had been through several different foster care
17 facilities.

18 And upon intaking that child I was not informed not only
19 appropriately in regards to my family composition the
20 placement of that child should not have taken place in my
21 home. And by placing that child in the environment in my
22 home with the persons that were in my home it actually
23 prevented that child from healing. And I, I say this because
24 when children are placed not only do they need to be placed
25 in an environment where they can heal, but they need to be

1 placed with a family and community that's going to support
2 that healing. And it wasn't because my family didn't support
3 her, but logistically speaking we were not able to.

4 If this community does not support this and this is one
5 of the most basic pieces, I work with children all day.
6 whether it's parent and a provider relationship or if it's
7 the community and the home that the child's living in if it
8 is not conducive to support that child the child's not going
9 to heal and it will not benefit the child. Yup, that is all.
10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 THE SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Lucy (inaudible)
13 I'm an immigrant too. I came here 42 years ago. My mom died
14 of cancer my grandma was American citizen, so I followed to
15 live with my grandma living illegal which is, I could be
16 citizen because my grandma was, so I was. And I have very
17 hard time in my life. People here don't know what it means
18 to be an immigrant. You don't want to be here you want to be
19 with your relatives so bad.

20 And when you come to the United States what you want to
21 do is the best you can. You don't commit a crime because if
22 you commit a crime they out of here so easy for us. It's
23 very, very hard. We have to please everyone.

24 I came here illegal yes, I had a hard time. My dad died
25 when he was 60 years old, you know he was a drunk, he drank.

1 And I got to see him hold my child, but my dad drinking.

2 And I came to United States to my grandma living
3 illegal. I was 16 when I decided to go to Dallas with my
4 older brother. My older brother he was 18, he was 16 when he
5 came to United States and then my little brother, my 14 year
6 old brother decided to come. We work so hard, so hard. You
7 don't know how hard it is that my body is so damaged now
8 because we have to try so hard you know.

9 I come here talk for those little ones. You say, not
10 you, you saying and saying, I keep hearing in the media that
11 those kids they are criminals, they're not criminals they
12 want a chance. They want a life like the way I had.

13 I marry my husband when I was 22 years, he was a great
14 husband. He was from Alma, so I moved to Alma since then you
15 know me and it was a great, great family. They adopt me his
16 family, they was like my own parents, but we lost them with
17 dementia. Very hard, very hard dementia and the Masonic
18 Home. It was horrible, horrible to see them gone because
19 they were my parents.

20 I have a horrible experience, you don't know how it is
21 to be discriminated because you have an accent. It's
22 horrible because you different. Oh, in the summer I'm darker
23 so oh, Lucy how, you look, you Mexican but in the, in the
24 winter I get so light. How can you be lighter because I'm a
25 white Mexican, yes I am. I'm a white Mexican and white

1 people, Mexicans in Mexico they get discriminated too you
2 know.

3 They say we don't know because you poor. It's not about
4 money, it's not money it's helping children that need us
5 (applause). If you believe in God, you believe in God, you
6 know Jesus come here so poor and I am that. I'm the most
7 poor child in here, the most poor child.

8 And I had opportunities. I raised two girls, I have a
9 good husband, I volunteer my time in school. You know I was
10 a chaperone, I was in the walking club, I was in everything,
11 I -- everything that you name it I was a volunteer. And
12 maybe some your kids I was with them. They needed me I was
13 like a, like the mother, they call me mom in the schools,
14 they call me mom. You know now I got old, I feel old and --

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thirty seconds.

16 THE SPEAKER: And I would love to be able to
17 volunteer my time for those kids. You guys you should come
18 here and do it. Give your life, give your soul to them
19 because they need us, they need us. It's not about money
20 come on, don't laugh up there and move your head like the way
21 I see --

22 THE SPEAKER: I thought she's not supposed to
23 be addressing the crowd?

24 THE SPEAKER: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but I know
25 but I'm --

1 MR. COSTANZO: I understand, but you got, you
2 have to talk to us.

3 THE SPEAKER: I'm so sorry. I'm hurt, I've
4 been crying. I've been locked in my home because I got
5 (inaudible), so so sorry if you don't get it. Protect these
6 children please.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you very much.

8 THE SPEAKER: You're welcome.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. ROOT: My name's Jim Root I'm from
11 St. Louis and I just got some questions that I'd like you to
12 think about. Okay, I'd like to thank everybody here. No
13 matter which side you're on they're here voicing their
14 opinions which is great for this country, okay.

15 Now down to the questions I've got to ask. Bethany
16 started out tonight making some statements. She started out
17 stating that no kids have left, but she corrected that
18 statement later saying one had left, okay. One was too many.
19 We don't want one here because it's not safe for that child
20 because we don't know what's going to happen, okay.

21 And as far as all these kids that everybody's freaking
22 out about how about the hundreds that died getting here
23 because our country opening them borders up it allowed this
24 to happen (applause). The kids that died on the way how are
25 you going to tell that to them. Now they want to bring kids

1 up here, okay, which I love kids. I've been very active in
2 sports and kids all my life. But it isn't fair to these kids
3 to bring 39 up here for so many days ship them out bring 39
4 more up.

5 My problem with that is they told us in St. Louis we was
6 going to have one prison we have five prisons there now,
7 okay. So what's happening from that building later on being
8 filled up entirely. We have got people out here sleeping in
9 the streets, we've got adults that need foster care homes.
10 That building could be used (applause).

11 Don't get me wrong I really applaud what they're doing,
12 they are taking care of kids. But wouldn't it make more
13 sense to take the money that this government is passing out
14 build facilities down in the southwest where we can put these
15 kids into. Teach them English, give them proper medical care
16 because they come up here we don't know what diseases they
17 might bring, okay. They have a lot down in South America.

18 Now, the other question I had is I brought it to their
19 attorney's attention last week that in order to become a, you
20 can't just cross borders and expect to get, come into that
21 country. You have got to go to the first country outside of
22 your country and ask. And from that point you need to go to
23 our embassies in that country and seek asylum from there.
24 You can't just cross borders and expect to seek asylum here.

25 I really feel bad for these kids, I feel bad for all

1 these people doing it, but our government is at fault
2 (applause). You need to have things straightened out and you
3 can't expect us to do part of it, okay. Yes we need to help,
4 but this isn't the way to do it because it's, we got to have
5 places for our own kids in our own community. We got to take
6 care of us first, okay (applause).

7 Thirty-nine kids up here for 40 days doesn't cut it
8 because next thing we know that building's still empty part
9 of it then they bring 80 kids up then they bring 120 kids up.
10 Then they keep kids there for longer periods of time because
11 once you change that over they can do that. I appreciate you
12 listening to me and just a regular American citizen I guess.
13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 THE SPEAKER: I totally didn't plan this, so
16 bear with me. My name's Lacy and I've been in this community
17 my whole life. When I went to this high school --

18 COMMISSIONER: Can you state your last name
19 please.

20 THE SPEAKER: Lacy (inaudible). When I went
21 to this high school this used to be a (inaudible) teachers
22 could walk down, you guys remember that? I remember
23 Officer Schooley being here, so I've been here my whole life.
24 And my point is our community is not ready or prepared for
25 this.

1 If our community was readily prepared for this I
2 wouldn't be in the situation I am helping kids in our
3 community who don't have anything, who come from drug
4 addiction, who come from the same things that these kids come
5 from. This isn't just a country outside of here that's
6 dealing with these problems American citizens are dealing
7 with these problems too (applause). Our schools are dealing
8 with these problems too.

9 I, I have just got guardianship of a daughter who I've
10 had for four years, she's lived in my custody for four years
11 and no one knew she lived with me for four years. I just
12 recently got guardianship of her. So you can't tell me that
13 these kids from another country are going to come into our
14 country with no documentation and we can think we can keep
15 track of them, we can't.

16 If there was a way that we could because I am for
17 children, I am for addiction, I am for helping all people.
18 But I am not for and none of our, none of our city is going
19 to be for when we can't keep accountability of these people
20 when we lose our own children into the system, when we lose
21 our own parents into this system. When we can't counsel
22 them, we can't send them for help, we have no place to put
23 them how can we then take in people from another country
24 that's my question (applause).

25 Because I have struggled in this community my whole life

1 because my mother was on welfare, my brother, my brother was
2 or my brother is still now a drug addict, but my dad was a
3 drug addict and no one could help my mother. She seeked help
4 in this community for 35 years and never received it. We are
5 not equipped to help other people, we are not and that's
6 plain and simple.

7 Like I wish we could because I, I actually was offered a
8 job, people told me Lacy you'd be great at working at this
9 facility. And I would be because I have compassion for
10 people, I love all people no matter where they came from and
11 I will help them to the best of my ability. But when I am
12 struggling here in our community to help the kids around us
13 and then someone wants to come into our community and help
14 people that aren't from our community that's what we're
15 standing against here.

16 We're not standing against immigration because we are
17 the United States of America we come together from all
18 countries, we're all immigrants here (applause). That's not
19 what this is it's the fact that we can't help our own people
20 and it's a sad reality and I get that. It's a sad reality.
21 I wish we could help all the people, but until we can help
22 our own neighbors, until we have enough supplies and until
23 the money is distributed evenly and not even evenly because
24 we all have to work for our own, so that's not what I'm
25 saying.

1 But until we can help our own community and our own kids
2 and our own parents and the on -- the only people going
3 through the same thing they're going through addiction
4 because what's cartel addiction, so they're coming here with
5 addiction. And it's not even, we have to help our own people
6 before we go around and help everybody else.

7 And I am sorry and I commend this community, but the
8 Baptist Christian Home just got shut down in St. Louis,
9 Michigan and they have been around for how long because they
10 didn't have funding. But yet we're going to fund another
11 facility to take in immigrants when the Baptist community has
12 been helping St. Louis for how long. Literally you know how
13 many kids got sent home from the Baptist community. How
14 many, 15. But yet we're going to help how many.

15 Let's help our community and then once we've helped our
16 community expand and help others (applause). That's the only
17 way we're going to succeed. Work hard and when our cup
18 overflows and then, when our cup overflows then we're able to
19 help the community.

20 But do you know what my mom was on welfare and I finally
21 beat the system, the only person in my family in this
22 community and I didn't have help. I had to work very hard
23 for it and I got there. And I'm sorry for these kids, but
24 everybody has to do the same thing, they have to do their
25 part work and work and work until they get there. And that's

1 not the way we set it up it's the way our government set it
2 up and it sucks and it fails, but here we are now.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

5 MS. DAVISON: My name is Bonnie Davison and
6 I'm from New Haven Township. Thank you for allowing me to
7 speak this evening about the rezoning. I was born here at
8 Smith Memorial Hospital, lived here in this community my
9 entire life. I did some reflecting on struggles Alma has
10 encountered. We've lost businesses or they downsized,
11 Lobdell's, Total Refinery, Alma Products-Gratiot used to be a
12 lot bigger facility than it is now.

13 With the closing and downsizing of these businesses it's
14 had major impact on our community; however, as a local
15 community we stayed strong and true to our hometown values.
16 This request supports only a leased satellite center, shelter
17 located in our community. This request has several ambiguous
18 statements leaving loopholes to the interpreters. I have put
19 together a packet and I'll leave one for each one of you
20 committee members to refer to for facts and also government,
21 legal links so you can verify the information.

22 This proposed shelter while it may bring some revenue to
23 our community the risks far outweigh the benefits. The
24 concerns of the location under the Michigan Zoning Enabling
25 Act says the site plan includes documents and drawings

1 required by zoning ordinance to ensure that the proposed land
2 use or activities is in compliance with local ordinance,
3 state and federal statutes. So please keep that in mind when
4 you review this information.

5 The proposed proclamation of this shelter in our
6 community has perpetual rotation of new adolescents. How can
7 they provide a loving, caring environment for 45 days before
8 these adolescents are moved to another facility is a concern.
9 Is there adequate spacing for these adolescents.

10 I'm a registered nurse and I have given my entire life
11 to health care, I understand age specific needs. I managed a
12 52 bed pediatric unit and an ICU pediatric unit and a 26 bed
13 pediatric emergency room. And I can bring expert testimony
14 on the needs for specific age and care that these adolescents
15 would require.

16 Bethany Services provides education, counseling,
17 recreation, age specific median standards which is required
18 by the health department and the ORR agreement. We don't
19 know the ages of these adolescents that are coming, so my
20 question is how can they say that they have reasonable rooms
21 to accommodate these different age groups, that's an unknown
22 variable. And in the packet you will see that there's, I
23 have, I identified each age group and you can look at that as
24 well.

25 Security. There are no internal security resources. If

1 one was to abscond this would further dilute our law
2 enforcement even more than now then they have to respond to
3 these calls. Because it's not a lockdown shelter this could,
4 these boys or adolescents could abscond more than once. And
5 there's no, in the application this doesn't speak to that
6 concern. At the hospital that person would be considered a
7 flight risk and they would be transferred, they make
8 recommendations.

9 Mental health services, repeat that tonight, but our
10 community is currently overwhelmed and there's no local
11 in-patient treatment centers available in our community.
12 They've already stated these adolescents come with a lot of
13 bad baggage, trafficking, abuse so these adolescents are
14 going to need intense help.

15 Medical leave. I'm a nurse incidents happen my question
16 is they have bare bone staffing if one of these adolescents
17 need treatment what's going to happen to the oversight for
18 these other adolescents that they're responsible for.
19 Bethany Christian Services has stated in their agreement that
20 no adolescent would leave, leave without a staff member with
21 them.

22 I worked in a hospital emergencies happen. How are they
23 going to transport that child for treatment and still
24 maintain adequate surveillance over the other staff in the
25 shelter. Therefore as a longstanding community member I ask

1 you not to recommend this request for conditional rezoning.
2 I also would ask you to consider and recommend due to the
3 conflict of interest that any Mason abstain from voting.
4 Thank you for your time.

5 (Applause.)

6 COMMISSIONER: We can also take that pamphlet
7 from you if you want us to have it. Thank you.

8 MS. FRANCO: My name is Eleanor Franco and I'm
9 also Hispanic and a registered nurse, I'm a registered nurse
10 I'm Hispanic. I work for Alma Public School for 10 years, I
11 was the first nurse for the elementary school. I too saw a
12 lot of needs that the children have that were never met.

13 And before I go on I'm going to say that I have a home
14 in Texas 45 miles from the border. None of the people that
15 are for rezoning this have mentioned that they have been
16 either to the border or live close to the border. They
17 don't, have not experienced what most of these people come
18 across.

19 When I'm there I listen to the radio in Mexico and they
20 all day broadcast the crimes in our community by all these
21 kids that are already indoctrinated when they come by the
22 mafia, the cartel. And what do you think when they get here,
23 their objective is to eventually take over the United States
24 because the cartel wants to be able to have free rein for
25 their drugs (applause). And to take little children for

1 organ, to use their organs and get ladies to use as
2 prostitutes.

3 We see everybody that comes across. We have seen our
4 friends that live around the border towns and ranches be
5 killed, mutilated and we have seen our towns there be taken
6 over by them. They'll come to your home and if they want the
7 home they tell you get out and if you don't get out guess
8 what happens to you. We have also been across the border if
9 they want your vehicle they come and tell you get out, give
10 me your keys. And if there's nobody there like a police or
11 the National Guard which they have all around the border they
12 shoot you. They don't think twice for what they want.

13 As the lady mentioned before in the past years, yes,
14 people from Mexico used to come across and all they wanted
15 was a job to make a living and support their families. That
16 is not the case now these kids that come over have already
17 been indoctrinated by the cartel and the mafia (applause).

18 I have spoken firsthand with some of them coming across
19 the border, they have you know got away from them. And they
20 have told me what they were taught and what they are, their
21 intention is here. So a lot of people here are naive to
22 think because they can work, they're migrants which I did and
23 they think that they're the saint, they are not.

24 These kids are not from across the border, Mexico
25 doesn't want them because they commit a lot of crimes as soon

1 as they get to Mexico. And they tell you what you want to
2 hear, they'll do what you want them to do and as soon as
3 they're out they know what to do, do what they're brought
4 here to do. And I'm telling you the truth there's no way, no
5 reason to lie because I have seen it firsthand.

6 And there's a great need here, for the kids here to be
7 taken care of. I saw it at school. Also there's people here
8 that are elderly, that are handicap; I'm Hispanic, I'm
9 elderly, I'm handicap I'm (inaudible). I have friends here
10 that want to help these kids what about us senior citizens.
11 Not one time has anybody come to my door and said do you need
12 any help, is there anything you, that we can do for you. And
13 their friends that are for this have they taken pity on us
14 elderly, no they don't care about us. They don't care about
15 the needs of the children or the servicemen their children.

16 If everybody wants to be a humanitarian start here,
17 start with the kids here (applause). These kids want their
18 (inaudible) they come and do what they came here to do and
19 that's never going to change. So thank you very much for
20 letting me speak.

21 (Applause.)

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

23 THE SPEAKER: Yeah, Ryan.

24 MR. KELLY: Pretty sure that's just going to
25 get the vote to be denied for the zoning change there. Good

1 job, ma'am, way to do it.

2 My name is Ryan Kelly (applause) I'm from Allendale,
3 Michigan and I'm on the planning commission there, so I'm in
4 your seat in Allendale, Michigan. I'm also a candidate for
5 Michigan governor (applause). I have been speaking to people
6 all across this great state of our's about these very issues
7 here, so this is something that many people have been brought
8 to the attention of across the state and have brought it to
9 my attention as well.

10 I would like to go back to the story that that lady
11 mentioned about Jose that was shot by gang members and then
12 flees to the United States. What about the children that get
13 shot at by gang members in Detroit and Chicago and
14 Los Angeles (applause). Why are we not putting Michigan
15 first (applause).

16 Why are we thinking about going these other directions
17 and ignoring our own citizens just like that lady was up here
18 just speaking about. I have spoke with multiple people
19 talking about the disasters of our foster care system here in
20 the State of Michigan. The adoption system in the State of
21 Michigan is a disaster.

22 We look at what happened in 2020 the mental health
23 issues in our children is through the roof. I was asked a
24 question the other day about how we're going to address
25 children suicides, I looked at that question and I thought

1 now to think that these are things we have to deal with. And
2 we have people that are trying to ignore that and take care
3 of illegal immigrants instead (applause).

4 And I'm here to encourage you to reject this zoning
5 change and put Michigan citizens first (applause). It is our
6 responsibility moving forward to make sure that the mental
7 health crisis that was created in 2020 with our children, our
8 veterans, business owners, many other people right here in
9 the State of Michigan. We take care of them first before we
10 reach across the border to illegals that are undocumented, we
11 don't know where they come from.

12 The vetting that they're talking about they don't know
13 where these people come from. We have a hard enough time
14 keeping track of the people here in this country let alone
15 someone who comes here illegally.

16 This is something that I am going to continue to have
17 discussions with across the State of Michigan with people. I
18 aim to help find solutions. Part of that solution is taking
19 that very facility and turning it into something that will
20 help Michigan citizens and Michigan children (applause).

21 You had the opportunity here today to speak with your
22 heart for America first, for our children first. I encourage
23 you to do that because you know every single one of you as
24 well as everybody here that we have a big problem in this
25 state that needs to be taken care of. As you're presented

1 with this opportunity to bring something to this town make
2 the right choice, deny the zoning change put Michigan first.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. PETTY: I'm Darlene Petty, I'm a lifelong
5 resident of Shepherd. I --

6 COMMISSIONER: Just one moment please. Excuse
7 me, excuse me we have a speaker so we're trying to hear her
8 name. Thank you.

9 MS. PETTY: I'm Darlene Petty, I'm a lifelong
10 resident of Shepherd. I am very, very thankful to be born in
11 the USA so we have the freedom to talk tonight. I appreciate
12 that and I appreciate listening and I very much appreciate
13 the person who insisted we salute the flag first, that's the
14 way it should be (applause).

15 But I will tell you I don't pay too much attention to
16 the media, I have not read much of anything on Facebook, I
17 don't get a newspaper; therefore, I haven't been influenced
18 by any of that. Just earlier today I got a message from my
19 cousin saying we're having this meeting tonight and I might,
20 I'm going because I do have a right to be here and again I
21 appreciate you listening.

22 I don't have any children in school anymore, but I have
23 11 grandchildren. And I think my questions are so basic that
24 I haven't heard a thing about them, but again I haven't read
25 any newspaper, I haven't read media so maybe they've all been

1 addressed. Please forgive me if you've already answered
2 these questions.

3 But a basic question is children that come in for the
4 next 45 days school will start by then, what will happen to
5 our schools. will they go to our public schools, will they
6 be integrated into our public schools, will our children be
7 dealing with kids that can't speak English. will our
8 students be integrated with kids that don't know our customs,
9 don't understand our rules and can't speak English. And I
10 don't think that'd be very fair to our local kids.
11 I haven't heard anything about schools tonight. And like I
12 said if that's, that's already been addressed and you've
13 already explained it please forgive me but I haven't heard
14 the answer, I would like to.

15 The second thing is very, very simple. I have not heard
16 the word Covid mentioned tonight (applause). Again please
17 forgive me if you've already addressed that and it's been all
18 over the newspaper I haven't seen it, I don't pay much
19 attention to the media. I'm very grateful my cousin let me
20 know about this meeting tonight. If I had more time I would
21 have invited more people, but I appreciate how many are here
22 and again I appreciate you listening.

23 The vetting process I heard that that includes you know
24 checking for parents, checking their ages, trying to assess
25 their ages all that different stuff, but I have not heard are

1 they vetted for Covid. We do not need more Covid coming into
2 our community. And even though I don't live in Alma
3 Shepherd's pretty close and I am not interested. And I
4 highly, highly encourage you to leave the zoning as it is and
5 don't give it another second thought. It is not (inaudible).
6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, I'm Marianne Williams, I'm
9 from Riverdale. I'm just really sad that we all have to be
10 here --

11 COMMISSIONER: You can turn the mic a little
12 bit.

13 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

14 COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Sorry. I'm really surprised
16 that the Planning Commission is even entertaining this idea.
17 It's just unfortunate, it really is, it breaks my heart. I'm
18 really surprised that this organization wants to be involved
19 in something like this. How is, rotating illegal immigrant
20 children that are being separated by their parents, from
21 their parents at the border purposely by the U.S. Government
22 is unacceptable. And we know that they're being separated
23 and we have no idea, they're undocumented children not
24 knowing who they really are, what age or health status, their
25 criminal history or anything.

1 And I feel this organization is hiding behind immoral
2 laws, manipulating language and intent. Overlooking the
3 peace and safety of this community, what this community wants
4 and let alone what these poor children need. This only
5 inspires more illegal immigration (applause).

6 And I find it very interesting and suspect, ask
7 yourselves why now. Why do we want this now when the entire
8 global human trafficking ring is being exposed and dismantled
9 right now as we speak. We're hearing about it through
10 Epstein Island, through Ghislaine Maxwell trial, we're
11 hearing about it, even Britney Spears is discussing it. The
12 effort to ship them across in the canal, we're hearing about
13 how they're shipping these poor children in shipping
14 containers and underground tunnels. It's disgusting.

15 And you know it's all being exposed and dismantled right
16 before our eyes and it's, it's just disgusting. And all the
17 routes are being currently dismantled right now. So these
18 human traffickers and criminals are getting desperate looking
19 for other avenues to traffic children and get their hands on
20 these kids. These are illegal kids, undocumented,
21 untrackable, untraceable they could easily get lost.

22 And you know it's just, this only opens the door for
23 more illegal immigration and for these sex traffickers to get
24 their hands on more and more children. All we're doing is
25 helping aid a very sick and broken system (applause). I feel

1 in my heart a scam from inception period. Ask yourselves
2 again why now, why do they want to do this now when everybody
3 is being caught in this global human trafficking ring. It's
4 highly suspect.

5 And -- sorry about that. I just feel as a society and
6 as a community we, we have to stop hiding behind corrupt laws
7 and making decisions based on money you know rather than
8 morality (applause). You have to make better choices and
9 decisions.

10 And I'm all about helping children, but this is not the
11 answer and this is not the solution. Sorry about that I just
12 want to make sure I get all my notes in. But I feel like
13 we're just using children as a business and they're not a
14 business you know. And going along with this is just telling
15 the world that it's okay to do this. We're just helping to
16 aid, opening the door for these criminals.

17 You know the world knows better now and we know exactly
18 what's going on and short-term shelters are not the answer.
19 And again you're just opening the door for the pedophiles and
20 all the traffickers to get their hands on them period, end of
21 story (applause).

22 If the people are opposed to this then, then it should
23 be the will of the people, what the people want. This is not
24 the solution. We shouldn't be honoring what an organization
25 wants. This is tearing apart the community and it's just

1 unacceptable. There has to be another solution and another
2 way. Thank you so much.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. SULLIVAN: Hi, I'm Michael Sullivan from
6 Alma. I'm going to be speaking in favor of the proposal. As
7 you know well there's lots of passion surrounding this issue,
8 we've heard it today. We heard really sincere questions, we
9 heard questions about government policy, about ethics, about
10 a wide, wide range of issues. They deserve to be raised, but
11 they deserve to be raised in an appropriate forum. And the
12 Zoning Commission, the Planning Commission and zoning laws
13 are not the forum for discussing this.

14 Your job as a planning commission is to set all of these
15 issues and passions aside even though they're real, even
16 though they should be respected and concentrate on the simple
17 question which is your task. That question is is the
18 proposed rezoning consistent with Alma Zoning Code.

19 Sometimes the answer to this question is no, you as a
20 group know that I stood before you and argued against
21 proposed rezonings. Sometimes the answer to this question is
22 yes. In this case because of precedent, because of the
23 decisions this Commission has already made I think the answer
24 has to be yes.

25 Years ago the Commission approved a request to use the

1 warwick property as an assisted living facility. On the
2 basis of this approval businesses have spent millions of
3 dollars to build and operate a facility. It is incorrect, to
4 change those rules now would be to deprive the owners of the
5 benefits of an investment they made on the basis of a
6 commitment that this city has already made.

7 You know the Zoning Commission decisions are hard. You
8 know that you're challenged to balance between two different
9 property rights and both property rights matter. The rights
10 of the owner of the property and the rights of the neighbors
11 and they don't always agree. To protect the neighbor
12 property rights the City has established a specific set of
13 questions that you are supposed to be asking to determine
14 whether or not this proposal should move forward.

15 When you read the zoning request what you will see is
16 again and again the answer is this has already been approved
17 with the prior special use permit. The special land use plan
18 which was passed before answers many of these questions. In
19 particular that special land use permit has already said that
20 an assisted living community, living community in warwick is
21 consistent with the neighborhood. It does not damage
22 property values. This is obviously a different population,
23 but it is a version of an assisted living community.

24 The question before the committee is not is this the use
25 you would do, it's not is this the use I would propose, it's

1 not certainly is this the best use of the property and it's
2 certainly, certainly not is the U.S. Government rational.
3 The question before the committee is is this proposal
4 consistent with what we have done in the past and consistent
5 with our zoning code. I think if you look at the facts of
6 the case the answer has to be yes. Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. SARGENT LENTZ: My name is
9 Mindy Sargent Lentz and I've lived and worked in the Alma
10 community since September of 1984. I won't tell you how old
11 I am, but I do dye my hair, okay. I did not grow up in Alma
12 I grew up in a safe community which became a very, very
13 unsafe community during my junior and senior high school
14 years. I haven't been back to my hometown since 2014, so
15 that's about seven years. But I would say in the 50 years
16 since it became unsafe it has not recovered and it never will
17 recover. So that background of mine hopefully will inform
18 what I'm about to say in that I do not support the rezoning.

19 And my concerns that I would raise to you today are just
20 a small part of that letter that some of you may have
21 received maybe you've even read. But my concerns are about
22 the safety of the, for the citizens of Alma. Now, to be
23 honest I live out in Pine River Township now, but the
24 citizens of Alma I think deserve the first priority.

25 My concerns are safety, so these are the questions. If

1 there's an increase in crime in our community such as
2 break-ins, assaults, theft, drug trafficking will those of
3 you here on this Planning Commission and the City Commission
4 and the City administration and I would even say Michigan
5 Masonic Home staff and maybe even Bethany Christian Services.
6 will you each and all want to, you know all of you be held
7 personally, legally, financially and morally responsible for
8 the possible demise and decline of our community (applause)?
9 And if you're not willing to be responsible then I don't
10 believe you have the right to make that decision (applause).

11 You have the authority to make these decisions, but I
12 believe your responsibility is to the community, to the
13 people who have lived and worked here for years if not
14 decades.

15 I understand that the Department of Homeland Security
16 has closed the Office for Victims of Illegal Immigrant Crime.
17 Without raising the taxes of our city and our county
18 residents how are you going to be held accountable then for
19 possible need for increased safety costs. Whether it be
20 through the Alma City Police or through the county sheriff's
21 or you know I'm not sure where you would, would seek
22 increased safety coverage, but I would have that concern.

23 Now, Greg, I appreciate your mentioning that you have
24 been a Mason for many years, but I would also ask that if
25 there are any others in the City leadership that are in the

1 positions to make these decisions that would benefit the
2 Michigan Masonic Home. I would say if any of you are
3 actively Free Masonry or Order of the Eastern Star or your
4 spouse is active in one of these groups I would say that that
5 would constitute a conflict of interest and (applause) you
6 may not be able to show impartiality in making these
7 decisions. So I would say that you should excuse yourself
8 from that decision making process (applause). Thank you for
9 listening.

10 MS. CARTER: Good evening, my name is
11 Dr. Bethany Carter. I hail from Lansing, Michigan and I am a
12 former Michigan Civil Rights Commissioner, former Community
13 Affairs Director with the Michigan Department of State and
14 I've worked in ministries across the state through and
15 especially in Detroit to fight human trafficking, gang
16 violence and also providing services for those who are indeed
17 undocumented, persons living in the shadows.

18 As a resident of Michigan I ask the City of Alma and
19 this Commission to reject the proposal to rezone the nursing
20 home facility to absorb these young men in the community who
21 are here illegally and without legal presence. They do not
22 have legal presence and I know that you have been told, told
23 that but that is not correct. When you are (applause), when
24 you are a ward of a federal government you are indeed a
25 prisoner and you do not have legal rights at that point, so

1 you are not a legal citizen, coming here illegally.

2 On June 7th of this year a unanimous United States
3 Supreme Court ruled that people living in the United States
4 for humanitarian reasons are ineligible to apply to become a
5 permanent resident. All the Justices, both the liberal and
6 the conservative Justices approved that none of these
7 children will ever have legal presence in the United States
8 because they did not come here legally. That is what the
9 United States Supreme Court said (applause).

10 I came to just warn you about certain things. You are
11 not a rubber stamp as the gentleman indicated that you must,
12 this is your only scope. You are opening these meetings
13 because you do have discretion to recommend to the Council
14 what you should do. If you do not want marijuana in your
15 community the people can speak and give you their voice and
16 then you should respond and take that information and make an
17 informed decision.

18 There was another person before me that indicated that
19 we are split now and especially in this community. And you
20 should not split your community based on a decision on
21 whether or not this facility is safe and it is, and you don't
22 have the information in front of you.

23 The Lansing crime rate where I live, and I've lived in
24 Wyoming, Michigan near Grand Rapids and I've lived in the
25 city proper of Detroit, not a suburb in the City of Detroit.

1 I'm the youngest of 10 and I grew up in Lansing. My father
2 fought in World War II, my mother she retired from the Ingham
3 County Sheriff's Department. They're both in heaven looking
4 down on me and I hope I do them proud.

5 But at the end of the day I grew up in Lansing, I don't
6 live in a community that is gated I live in a modest home and
7 I live with my husband. I have a mortgage on my home and I
8 have used vehicles, so I am not coming as some wealthy
9 socialite. I am warning you that we have crime increasing in
10 Lansing. The Lansing crime has increased, as of today 17
11 people have been murdered in Lansing and that is as of today.

12 In 2020 there were 20 murders in 52 weeks, 365 days, 20
13 in the entire year. In 2019 there were 13 murders in the
14 entire year. Lansing murders have increased and WLNS in
15 Lansing has indicated that Sheriff Wriggelsworth, our Ingham
16 County sheriff has to provide staff and support to the
17 Lansing Police Department because they are not able to keep
18 up with the crime.

19 And I really want you to do a Google search. On June
20 16th of 2021 17 year old Jaydin Wilder killed and murdered an
21 individual here, an individual here.

22 This city, this county, Gratiot County has a three, two
23 prisons and one jail. You know about incarceration and you
24 of all people should know that this is an incarceration
25 facility. The people who leave here, the 17 year olds, do

1 not call them children these are young men and young men
2 commit crimes (applause). When they leave here they're going
3 to absorb themselves in communities of color where they can
4 where I live and I don't want them.

5 I want to tell you that MS-13, Vice Lords, (inaudible)
6 Tigers, Black (inaudible), Spanish Cobras, Sinaloa Cartel,
7 Los Zetas, (inaudible) are the known gangs, are the known
8 gangs in Michigan. And so I'm telling you right now that
9 Gratiot County the population of your prisons are exactly
10 what is being brought into your community.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Can you, can you wrap it
12 up?

13 MS. CARTER: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to
14 share that, I'm almost done please. The, 14 percent of the
15 population in Michigan is black and yes I'm black, but we
16 make up 53 percent of the prison population. And I'm telling
17 you that you cannot, the demographics that you see, the
18 breakdown no skill, poor education, family unit is not there,
19 exposed to extreme trauma, social influence, no jobs, no
20 citizenship, no activities that is a recipe for a path to
21 prison and not anything more (applause). And so I implore
22 you please that the 16 year olds in Lansing are killing
23 people.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank, thank you.
25 Appreciate it.

1 MS. CARTER: Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. FORTINO: Wow. I know most of you, for
4 those of you I don't know I'm Chuck Fortino. I'm old and
5 retired, some would say decrepit. I've lived in Alma for 30
6 years; although, I don't count. For most of those 30 years I
7 served as city attorney, so I know a little bit about how the
8 planning commission works and what its role is and I will
9 address that in just a moment. I just want to comment on a
10 couple things I heard. I want to assure you I'm not running
11 for anything, so I am not here to do a cheap panhandling job
12 for votes (applause).

13 I've listened with great interest to everything that's
14 been said. Up till now it seems to me there's one pervasive
15 factor that runs through everything that has been said by the
16 folks who speak in opposition to this change and that is fear
17 plain and simple. I think the previous speaker made it
18 abundantly clear that the motivation, the concern is fear,
19 fear of the unknown I assume.

20 And it had been my hope that we'd be beyond that.
21 Beyond the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross in my grandparents
22 yard 90 years ago, I thought and I hoped those days were
23 over. Those folks did that out of fear. They feared the
24 Italians at that time. I don't know why, but I can guess
25 that they were going to bring crime, the mafia, the La Cosa

1 Nostra. And in reality they fled that very thing and that's
2 what brought them here to America was fleeing that crime,
3 fleeing that corruption, fleeing that poverty.

4 You have the responsibility as you already know to
5 review and make findings on your Section 381 of the Zoning
6 Ordinance. There are four things that you need to address
7 the first whether the requested zoning change is justified by
8 a change in condition since the original ordinance was
9 adopted or by an error in the original ordinance.

10 The original ordinance clearly never contemplated this
11 precise type of R-3 use. But I believe you are all aware
12 that Michigan common law and the Zoning Enabling Act prohibit
13 any municipality from saying you can't locate in our city if
14 you are a legal use so long as you comply with whatever
15 regulations and requirements the planning commission and/or
16 the city commission impose.

17 Under Michigan law a legal entity cannot be denied the
18 ability to operate so long as they comply with your
19 requirements. And you can impose whatever requirements you
20 want in your conditional zoning agreement. You can address
21 some of the concerns the folks have raised tonight in your
22 conditional zoning agreement.

23 The second requirement the precedence of the possible
24 affects of such precedence which might likely result from
25 approval or denial of the petition. This is a unique

1 situation. It's difficult for me to comprehend how it
2 provides a precedence, this is a tender situation. This will
3 be for a short period of time I assume and -- I assume that
4 the folks are going to be quiet so that the speaker can
5 speak?

6 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I was just going to turn
7 the mic on. Be polite please.

8 MR. FORTINO: You can impose a time limit if
9 you wish, you can impose whatever conditions you deem
10 appropriate.

11 The third requirement the ability of the city or other
12 governmental agencies to provide any services, facilities
13 and/or programs that might be required. Many comments have
14 been made about security and the ability of the City to deal
15 with security issues. Matt addressed that in his questions
16 to the, to the Bethany folks. I think at least it seemed to
17 me your questions were answered, Matt.

18 The more appropriate question, I should say another
19 appropriate question might be what happened at their other
20 facility. And if I understand correctly the only incident
21 there was a child who wandered off looking for his family,
22 that hardly seems to me to be a matter of great concern.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I'm going to give you just
24 a little extra time because you were interrupted.

25 MR. FORTINO: I only got one more.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Okay.

2 MR. FORTINO: The last requirement under the
3 ordinance is to consider the affect of approval on the
4 adopted developmental policies of the city and other
5 governmental units. It shouldn't have any affect on the
6 City's master plan, shouldn't have any affect at all. And to
7 the extent that this body is concerned that it would have
8 affect again you can impose such conditions as you see fit in
9 order to address those concerns. With those thoughts in mind
10 I would hope you would favorably consider the application.

11 (Applause and boos.)

12 MS. WINTER: Good evening, hi. My name is
13 Holly Winter and first of all I'd like to thank you all for
14 hearing from all of us tonight. I'm going to start off with
15 saying a lot of us, well, a group of us in particular we've
16 been called a lot of names racists, (inaudible),
17 demophobic --

18 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: You're from Alma, right?

19 MS. WINTER: I'm from Alma, yes. (Inaudible)
20 and I was born and raised in Alma. We've been called a lot
21 of names racist, demophobic, not very you know Christian
22 we've been called. So -- they said we've been spreading
23 falsehoods, so what I'd like to do is actually read from the
24 Bethany Christian Services Handbook that way there's no doubt
25 on where this information is coming from that I have.

1 First I'd like you all to know that it is titled
2 Juvenile Sex Offender Residential Treatment. Bethany
3 Christian Services is a juvenile sex offender residential
4 treatment center. It is an open program dedicated to
5 assisting youth in understanding and overcoming their sexual
6 offense history. Staff has specific training in child sexual
7 abuse and sexual offending issues. Therapy focuses on
8 understanding the youth's sexual offending (inaudible) and
9 promoting change to develop and maintain relationships.

10 This is a residential treatment program by the State of
11 Michigan and is fully accredited by the Council on
12 Accreditation of Services for Families & Children.

13 Bethany's services, therapy services are specifically
14 designed to help youth who have committed sexual offenses.
15 It is important to remember that therapy is a long and
16 difficult journey and setbacks may occur along the way.

17 Here they learn about the youth's sexual offense
18 problems, the sexual offense cycle, his relapse prevention
19 plan and support needed in this plan including community
20 involvement.

21 These youths they are housed in units. Each youth's
22 unit operates on a level system in order to receive specific
23 privileges. There are six levels of each unit. Daily
24 activities on a resident's current level achievements include
25 that each resident will begin on a level one and will

1 progress through six levels after success in meeting
2 treatment goals and group therapy work. Higher levels offer
3 increased privileges and expect greater level of
4 responsibility.

5 After a short assessment period you may attend community
6 church with other residents and staff, occasionally special
7 outings are organized such as work projects at a local city.
8 Educational opportunities for these youths include being
9 enrolled in school through the public school system. It does
10 begin in an on campus classroom at the beginning of his
11 placement, but he can later be transferred to an off campus
12 school as he shows consistent progress in his treatment.

13 This was another interesting note that I found in this
14 handbook. A member of the treatment team at Bethany will
15 take him to any court hearings he is required to attend. For
16 youths who are required to participate in the Michigan Sex
17 Offender Registry Bethany's personnel will routinely
18 accompany residents to the police department to update and
19 verify their address as required by law.

20 The discharge pleading includes returning people home
21 with a parent, living with a relative or living in a
22 specialized group or foster care home or a supervised
23 independent living. Meaning they would be moving to another
24 treatment center, a locked treatment facility or a juvenile
25 detention center after their therapy is offered for two

1 months to help support his transition back into the
2 community.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: One minute.

4 MS. WINTER: Okay. Reasons that youth can be
5 discharged from this program include a sexual re-offense,
6 truancy from Bethany, persistent physical aggression towards
7 others or ongoing lack of motivation and progress.

8 One of the statements of Bethany Services regarding
9 strengthening older children in the juvenile system states
10 that the juvenile (inaudible) justice program older children
11 with a criminal history are offered community based
12 prevention and treatment services to prepare them for a
13 stronger future.

14 So why am I reading this because we are only being given
15 surface level information (applause). We are not being told
16 the truth of what this establishment really is and what
17 they're bringing into our community.

18 And I'd just like to offer a statistic. Studies have
19 found that 70 percent of sex offenders were convicted of
20 another crime or of another sex offense within five years, 21
21 percent within 10 years and 21.4 percent were arrested for
22 other violent offenses. So being unChristian this is what
23 has been a big to do in our community. I'd just like to say
24 that nowhere in the Bible does God nor Jesus tell us that
25 when the devil comes knocking on our door we must let him in.

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

3 MS. LUNEACK: I think, well, my name is
4 Linda Luneack I live in Alma. I think Bethany's proposal is
5 really for unaccompanied immigrant use not for juvenile sex
6 offenders (applause), so just let's just state that out
7 there. I'm actually here to read a letter from my daughter
8 who is an attorney in Louisiana.

9 Dear Planning Commission, my name is Meredith Luneack.
10 I am an attorney and I currently represent mostly young
11 Central American asylum seekers detained in federal detention
12 centers in the south. I've worked with refugees including
13 children detained in Texas, Louisiana and up and down the
14 U.S./Mexico border. During my time working with immigrants
15 I've yet to meet one person unworthy of compassion and
16 acceptance.

17 I was also born and raised in Alma. I spent all my
18 formative years here and graduated from Alma High School as
19 did my brother and sister. My parents both went to Alma
20 College. My dad Phil was born and raised in St. Louis and
21 many generations of Luneacks established their families in
22 Gratiot County. In short Alma is in my blood. I grew up in
23 the same close knit town that you all know well.

24 The time I was most proud and most grateful to be from
25 Alma is when they cared for me and my family after my dad

1 passed away. I was 13, a child in need and a warm and caring
2 community in Alma helped me through my grief and pain. From
3 my teachers at Alma Middle School to my church community to
4 my neighbors down the street on Neil (ph) Avenue. I was
5 traumatized by the loss of a parent, but I was also changed
6 forever for the positive because of my town.

7 The care I received after my dad died instilled in me
8 instinct for love and compassion without condition. A
9 practice I try always to bring to my life and my work even
10 when I come across people I don't agree with.

11 As an immigration lawyer there's plenty I can say about
12 what it means to be an asylum seeker including how asylum
13 seekers are tracked by ICE as children and as adults. But I
14 write to you now as someone from Alma, someone who knows this
15 community to be one that can care for children in need.

16 I can promise you from my legal experience that these
17 children will have undergone traumas unimaginable to most of
18 the residents fortunate enough to live in Alma. These
19 children are victims here because they have been driven from
20 their homes by forces that children should not have to endure
21 because they have no other choice, because they need support
22 and protection. The difference between these children and
23 the ones born in Gratiot Community Hospital is simply a
24 matter of geography.

25 Our people know how to care for children in need, I know

1 it because I have been a child in need here in Alma. Please
2 do not let the loud voices of the fearful let us lose touch
3 with our fundamental character. I would urge the Planning
4 Commission to permit the rezoning and demonstrate once again
5 that Alma is driven by love not by fear and ignorance.

6 Sincerely, Meredith Luneack.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. FRANCO-CLARK: Hi, my name is
9 Yvette Franco-Clark. I just want to say thank you very much
10 for opening up this meeting for everybody to come and give
11 their points of view and their feelings on this whole matter
12 that, this is going to affect the whole community of Alma and
13 possibly Gratiot County, so this is something serious to pay
14 attention to.

15 I also want to say that from the residents who expressed
16 their thoughts and feelings on this issue and to be told that
17 it is all based on fear is to say that our feelings don't
18 even matter. We are U.S., Gratiot taxpaying citizens and we
19 have a right to our feelings as well as those that say we are
20 fearful which is not the case (applause).

21 And with that said I want to list some facts here, this
22 microphone is giving me a problem. Okay. So this is all
23 based on some research that we have collected this is not
24 based on fear information. Once released into the interior
25 of the United States with few exceptions the unaccompanied

1 children will generally remain in the country. I'm going to
2 say unaccompanied children as UACs just to shorten it up.

3 The UACs frequently abscond and fail to appear for their
4 removal hearings before an Immigration judge with 66 percent
5 of all removal orders for UACs from fiscal year 2015 to 2017
6 resulting from a UAC's failure to appear for a hearing. Only
7 3.5 percent of unaccompanied minors apprehended are
8 eventually removed from the United States. Over 100,000 UACs
9 were released into the interior from fiscal year 2016 to
10 today.

11 The 100,000 plus UACs who are released are in addition
12 to the more than 167,000 family units. Alien children who
13 are accompanied by an adult claiming to be a relative or
14 guardian that were apprehended by U.S. Customs & Border
15 Protection from fiscal year 2016 to date. In recent months
16 there has been a staggering increase in the apprehension of
17 UACs and family units from Central America crossing the
18 southern border and being released into the United States.

19 The number of family units crossing the border increases
20 by 625 percent since last April. In December officials
21 apprehended over 4,000 UACs and 8,000 family units an
22 increase of 30 percent and 68 percent respectively since
23 October.

24 Thousands of these unaccompanied children particularly
25 young teenage girls are subjected to sexual abuse by

1 smugglers, criminals and even government officials along the
2 border.

3 I just want to read, since I've only got two minutes
4 left here I'm going to read a couple of articles to you with
5 some other facts. And this comes, this is dated July 5th,
6 2021 so this is recent. A third of the 5300 unaccompanied
7 minor children being housed at emergency shelters don't have
8 close family in the U.S. According to Health & Human
9 Services data advocates for emergency shelters say the
10 facilities are met to safely shelter children for a couple of
11 weeks while the U.S. Government tries to find relatives in
12 the, in the country.

13 Another article that was dated June 11th, this comes
14 from Elizabeth Gretter, Senior Attorney at Children's Rights.
15 who states that we are at the same time under many of the
16 same federal safety functions that have plagued the states
17 and place children in harm's way for years still remain an
18 issue. She said DHHS is still not consistently performing
19 initial and annual safety checks when kids are placed with
20 unlicensed relatives.

21 while kinship care is preferred when a child must be
22 removed from the birth parent as opposed to foster care
23 living with strangers this lapse should be corrected.

24 She gives a story, last year's death of
25 Cornelius Frederick at the hands of staff in a group home

1 where he lived raises a red flag regarding the state's
2 oversight of institutions and group homes according to the
3 monitor. which found plenty of evidence that children are
4 sometimes put at grave risk for their safety and well-being.

5 Last article, 50 seconds left. (Inaudible) said she has
6 seen a plan to reunite the 2300 children already separated
7 and organizations working with them expected to continue
8 their work they're still going to remain apart for the
9 foreseeable future. Tonya Brown the Regional Director for
10 Bethany Christian Services said the organization is caring
11 for about 15 children who arrived in Maryland since May 7th,
12 the youngest was 18 months old.

13 In the past teenagers who made the journey to the United
14 States would arrive with scraps of paper pinned to their
15 clothes or relative's phone numbers written on their hands.
16 The more recent arrivals sometimes don't even have that much.

17 One last thing that's really important I want to give
18 and then I'll be done, six seconds, okay. while some won't
19 face criminal charges like their parents they are still
20 subject to deportation. Nathan Pew's (ph) group is working
21 to explain their legal rights and get them lawyers. That
22 would normally involve interviewing relatives and gathering
23 information that might form the basis of an asylum claim, but
24 the lawyers are discovering the children who have been
25 separated from their parents don't know why they fled their

1 homes.

2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

4 MS. VARTEER: Can you hear me?

5 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

6 MS. VARTEER: Good evening. My name is
7 Maria Varteer (ph) and I am a resident of Alma. I have
8 worked with the migrant population for 30 years and I still
9 do some work with translating for them and taking them to
10 doctor appointments and such.

11 In the early Eighties my church Alma First Church of God
12 sponsored a couple of families that were running away from
13 the ruthless communists in Cambodia. Not only our church,
14 but a couple other churches in the area. We housed them,
15 took them to DSL classes and other places they had to do
16 their business. We took a big leap of faith taking them in
17 and they took a big leap of faith trusting us with their
18 children in our schools.

19 Our greatest reward; however, was watching them grow and
20 learning English and watching their confidence grow as they
21 watched the community accept them. They moved on to live in
22 California. The kids that came when they were little are now
23 professionals. Just like we gave them a chance we should
24 give our young refugees a chance.

25 The little English that they learn here they can use in

1 their country when they go back and possibly get a good job
2 or better job. I think we could open our hearts and give
3 these kids a chance. They are not here by choice they had to
4 flee their country. And I know that Alma is a good community
5 and we can show them that they are welcome here.

6 And this is not in my notes that I was going to say
7 this, but we have a lot of Guatemalan people that live here
8 and work here. And I work with people from Central America,
9 Guatemala, Honduras and every time I take these guys and
10 they've lived here for eight years or so. And they see
11 people begging they ask why are these people begging there
12 are jobs out there why don't they take them.

13 And truthfully I tell them because that they want their
14 weekends off, they want, they want health care and they want,
15 they don't want to work weekends and so forth and you guys
16 are willing to work for whatever pay they get. These kids
17 that they work in their land they work for \$5.00 a day and
18 they stand and go and if they get picked to get work they
19 work for \$5.00 a day.

20 And so I mean, and they have, they've, they have lived
21 here forever and they've lived in your backyards they have
22 not harmed anybody. And they're only coming here to work so
23 you can have food on your table. Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. HUTCHERSON: Hi, my name is

1 Christie Hutcherson and I'm the founder of Women Fighting for
2 America. I am from (applause) -- actually I got a call about
3 two and a half, three weeks ago from a huge group of
4 concerned citizens of Alma. And the reason why I'm here is
5 because they understand my extensive, extensive work that
6 I've done at the border. I have spent over 30 solid days at
7 the border from Tijuana, Mexico to Texas.

8 I have rode along with SABER teams, I have interacted
9 with drug cartels, I've talked to the federales (ph) on both
10 the Mexican side. I've had an ICE agent undercover ride with
11 me just recently a couple weeks ago for one week on his time
12 off. I've also interviewed Border Patrol agents from
13 California all the way to Texas. I have been to these
14 detention facilities, I have interviewed. So I can kind of
15 say I've been boots on the ground physically seeing what's
16 going on with these UACs.

17 And I'm here to tell you a couple things. These UACs,
18 these children and you have to understand for American
19 citizens who do not spend time at the border because unless
20 you've been down to the border, unless you've talked to the
21 ICE agents in depth off the record because they're under a
22 gag order with this Administration. You will not understand
23 that nobody crosses the border from California to Texas
24 without in one way, shape or the other paying the drug
25 cartels.

1 THE SPEAKER: That's right.

2 MS. HUTCHERSON: What does that mean because
3 we don't understand this. The drug cartel -- it costs 2,000,
4 it used to be \$2,000.00 but now because of this
5 Administration and I'm not for either administration, this
6 isn't about policies and agendas. So when these Border
7 Patrol agents -- when these, when these children come across
8 the border they are paying the drug cartels anywhere from
9 4,000 to \$6,000.00. And it doesn't matter if they're an
10 infant all the way up to 100 plus.

11 If you do not have the money to pay for, the drug cartel
12 to get you across the border you are in holding to them. And
13 how do, you say how can the drug cartel keep track of those
14 individuals once they cross the border and come into a town
15 like Alma. These children, these young adults they
16 understand the culture of the drug cartel in their countries,
17 perspective countries.

18 The drug cartels tell them once you're over in the
19 United States you cannot pay the money to us you're either
20 going to have to work it off in the drug trade or sex trade.
21 Or if you get, if you're lucky enough that they allow you to
22 get a job and work in the community as a farm worker or
23 whatever they have to pay back the drug cartel. These are
24 children by the way.

25 I have seen the tattoos on these kids, I've seen the

1 different color wrist bands on these unaccompanied children.
2 And if you don't understand what a wrist band or tattoo is
3 please get yourself informed.

4 These kids unfortunately yes they have been abused and
5 exploited and trafficked along the way, I've seen the rape
6 trees. I have pictures of rape trees, that's part of my
7 (inaudible). I'm also going to give you two sheriffs that I
8 want you to call. They know I'm here.

9 Sheriff Mark Lamb, I'm sure you guys have seen him on
10 FOX and CNN and other news organizations. I also want you to
11 call Sheriff Mark Daniels. These guys are in Cochise County.
12 They are on the front lines every day dealing with this not
13 just recently, but year after year from the Bush
14 Administration on. They know a little bit about the border
15 crisis and these unaccompanied children and where they come
16 from.

17 They are not, they are not capable of being turn outs in
18 our society. And once these kids at 16, 17 years old they're
19 going to age out, where are they going to go. They're going
20 to go in your communities, they'll be held to the drug
21 cartels and they are going to nine times out of 10 start a
22 life of crime.

23 I'm going to read you some statistics here really quick.
24 I'm going to talk about, first of all also I want to talk
25 about the system because in reality I was looking at

1 Bethany's rebuttal proposal underneath the diligently working
2 to reunify children with their families. If that's really
3 the truth and that's what you want to do is reunify these
4 children we already have that system in place.

5 The process to reunify unaccompanied children with their
6 families exists within DHS and the ICE system. ICE, their
7 operations is funded and paid for by the American taxpayers.
8 They will actually contact, within 48 to 72 hours of these
9 children coming over our border they get in contact with the
10 consulate of these countries, they will also work with
11 hospitals on the ground and churches.

12 That ICE agent after they finally figure out what
13 country of origin these children come from they have the
14 capability within 72 hours of putting them on an ICE plane
15 with an ICE agent and taking them back to the country of
16 origin and reuniting them with their families.

17 I also real quick want to talk about the vetting process
18 because this is really key. ICE agents, BP and I'm going to
19 give you this packet because I'm going to give you numbers
20 that you can call and verify everything I'm saying here
21 because this is very important to know. They do not have the
22 capability of vetting any of these children. There's no DNA
23 testing, there is no IDs, there's no birth certificate, so
24 they have no way to tell the age of these children, where
25 they're from or anything else.

1 So you do not know and by the way Bethany Services has
2 none of that capability either. Because we do not have that
3 within our legal system to take a child supposedly without a
4 birth certificate, we don't know who they are or where they
5 come from.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

7 MS. HUTCHERSON: So I would just tell Alma
8 that this, this is very key. You guys need to stand up
9 against this because this is going to start crime in your
10 communities. If you look at Minneapolis, Minnesota
11 underneath the Bush and Obama Administrations what they did
12 to Somalians and immigration. Look what happened to their
13 city --

14 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Your time --

15 MS. HUTCHERSON: -- and they're coming here
16 folks.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Time's up. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. GALLAGHER: Good evening, my name's
20 Nancy Gallagher. I have been a resident of this community
21 for 50 plus years --

22 COMMISSIONER: Just a second. Can you start
23 over again please. If we can have silence.

24 THE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

25 COMMISSIONER: Excuse me, sir. You are doing

1 the same thing, sir. Thank you. Go ahead. State your name
2 again, start over.

3 MS. GALLAGHER: My name's Nancy Gallagher and
4 I've lived in this community for over 50 years. I have been
5 on your side of the table, but never with an audience this
6 big. I served on the City Commission and the Planning
7 Commission about 12 years and have been on the, served on
8 boards of Alma College, the hospital and the Michigan Masonic
9 Pathways.

10 I'm obviously not a Mason, I don't have any current
11 connection there, but the other, some of the other comments
12 made me compelled to urge you to consider the applicant and
13 the character and integrity of these two nonprofit
14 organizations that are before you.

15 The, I know that some people have strong feelings about
16 immigration, about immigrants, about a whole host of issues
17 and needs in our society. I'm not saying that, that their
18 feelings, their opinions aren't valid, but they have very,
19 very little to do with the issue before you tonight.

20 Masonic Pathways is one of several large nonprofit
21 institutions in our community that I think have totally
22 affected the character of this community. They're the
23 pillars that provide all these wonderful employee programs
24 and services that really give us the character of this
25 community. We're, we're a, a town of caregivers. We have

1 hundreds working at Masonic Pathways taking care of some of
2 our most beloved senior citizens and they use our hospital
3 and there's a great synergy there.

4 Our hospital has always been one of the largest
5 employers, nonprofit care giving people, wonderful facility.
6 Our college, our public schools, we are a city of nonprofits
7 and Masonic Pathways has been a good steward of this
8 community and I don't think they deserve to be treated as
9 some money grubbing organization. They are trying to make
10 the highest and best use of the property they have.

11 I, I appreciate that people think there are other needs,
12 needs to support veterans, needs to support children,
13 childhood psychiatric care I think that is huge on everyone's
14 list. And I find it so ironic that someone would read a
15 chapter from Bethany's publication talking about how they
16 offer services for children involved in sexual abuse. If we
17 had a child psychiatric center dealing with traumatized
18 children many, many, many of them would be victims and
19 perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Those are the kids we'd
20 be treating.

21 That is not what's proposed for this facility. But I
22 agree we do need to care for all these other needs, but we
23 can do both. I, I think that we will hurt our chances as a
24 community to provide other services if we don't approve this
25 rezoning.

1 The economic vitality of a large institution like
2 Masonic is vitally important to our employment base. We're
3 going to add 50 jobs. If we don't do this and Masonic
4 doesn't have another ready tenant they may have to cut more
5 people.

6 There are, if we want to -- you know I expect from this
7 group here they're going to be contacting other nonprofits
8 and trying to find someone to do, to address some of the
9 needs for children and veterans and some of the things that
10 we've heard. I don't know any other large nonprofit that's
11 going to want to take this chance if, if they know that, that
12 they're going to not be subject to the rule of law and our
13 zoning ordinances but to emotional changes from these people.

14 I would ask you one thing we don't have to speculate
15 about what would happen Bethany is highly involved in
16 Grand Rapids, it's only 80 miles away. I would urge you to
17 look at two things, one is the schools. My sister's worked
18 at Kentwood High School for 20 years. They have, 20 percent
19 of their student body in the high school is refugee or
20 immigrant, over 400 refugees. And that has made it a really
21 thriving and vital school.

22 The other thing I'd like you to look at there's a study,
23 if you go to Grand Rapids Chamber Refugee Impact there's an
24 important economic study that the refugee population in Kent,
25 in Grand Rapids is now about eight percent. Because of the

1 concerted effort of groups like Bethany and other churches to
2 provide assistance it's had a hugely positive impact on
3 Grand Rapids. None of these things that you're hearing about
4 crime and terrible economic impact it's been just the
5 opposite.

6 So there is 20, they are 20,000 housing units short in
7 Grand Rapids and, and a lot of it's because of the vibrant
8 refugee and immigrant communities that are there. So I
9 appreciate that people are fearful, I appreciate they have
10 concerns, but let's, we don't have to speculate because
11 Bethany has a track record. They are a highly, well regarded
12 institution and they deserve your support. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. LAINGSBURG: Hi, my name is
16 Donna Laingsburg (sic) and I am, I'm from, a Michigan
17 resident in the Grand Rapids area. The statement about
18 Grand Rapids and Kentwood is categorically false. Kentwood
19 has got a reputation of being known as Brentwood and people
20 are fleeing there by the groves, the actual property owners
21 and there's a very high tenant population. I want to clear
22 the record on that.

23 I'm going to stand up here right now because I am
24 absolutely insulted by anyone who wants to claim a religious
25 background for a profit in any way, shape or form. It's

1 abhorred to me, it's repulsive because just because somebody
2 has God, God on their sign on the door doesn't mean he's here
3 at all (applause) and I am insulted and sick by this.

4 Now anybody can say anything that they want, but what it
5 comes down to is what you do. I am, I'm an adopted mother, I
6 adopted a child. I was lied to by the adoption industry
7 massively, massively. I have to pay for meds, 20 grand a
8 year plus for her meds, there is no help. And these guys
9 walk away from this after they take the cash and they have
10 nothing to do with it afterwards. They're like stray dogs
11 that crap in your yard and you guys are going to have to
12 pick up the bill (applause).

13 While you guys up there have one job to do and that is
14 to protect the citizens of your community. You have no
15 obligation and I'm a business owner, I'm successful and I
16 don't want to hear any pity things from anybody else. I got
17 a black kid, I've been spit on. I've been told that I'd give
18 you a loan if you were a guy and I can give a crap, this is
19 not regarding politics and I am still very, very, very
20 successful because I don't need anybody's pity vote and it is
21 abhorred to me.

22 So let's go back and look at this as a business owner
23 because all of this feeling stuff is like a child making a
24 case in front of someone who has no right to make a case if
25 they can't do it like an adult with actual facts. And I'm

1 going to tell you your one job is to, is to support these
2 wonderful people who are bright and their kids. I care for
3 all kids, but I care about them too. I have biological kids
4 and adopted kids I don't see the difference, but I think
5 there's a lot of people here that do. And it's not
6 necessarily the residents here because they're not making
7 money off of it, all right.

8 So anyhow I'm not a CPA, but I am a business person in
9 some very large industries, pretty much seen it all done it
10 all. And I am not a good person putting up with bullshit and
11 that's what I'm seeing (applause).

12 Every single person in this room no matter what side
13 you're on (inaudible) --

14 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: If you can address the
15 panel please.

16 MS. LAINGSBURG: Don't think you're that smart
17 because this frickin' government we have has built every one
18 of you on both sides and your children.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Ma'am, the chair please.

20 MS. LAINGSBURG: Okay. Well, you too. Your
21 kids, everyone. They built every single one here and don't
22 think they didn't. Anyhow I'm not going to look at this as
23 an action of a nonprofit because a nonprofit is just a sham
24 for actually having a balance sheet that comes to zero. It
25 doesn't mean that they're not profiting because they are.

1 The top six executives for Bethany make over a million
2 dollars.

3 The total revenue, the total revenues for 2019 are
4 \$128,942 -- \$128,142,800.82. Refugee and immigration
5 services is \$43 million, 43 million 207 dollars and it's a
6 third of their frickin' revenue. This is a profit center,
7 this is big business, huge. And not only that, but anybody
8 wants to say that it's not big business I got to tell you go
9 back to frickin' school or get some econ because you're not
10 qualified to make this decision.

11 So anyhow for five years their total is \$409,551,925.00.
12 We break that, let's just give Bethany the benefit of the
13 doubt instead of \$43 million we just go down to 41,000 (sic)
14 for refugees that's a five year total of \$200 million.
15 Refugees served by what it says on their website is 550,
16 5,579 refugees serviced for that amount of money.

17 Are you kidding me. I would fire you all if you worked
18 for me for nonperformance, it's pathetic, that's incredible.
19 Their salary is \$63 million in salaries which is half the
20 frickin' revenue. And that \$43 million is public money, it's
21 from all of us (applause).

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Can you wrap it up
23 please.

24 MS. LAINGSBURG: They also have 35
25 organizations and all their suborganizations. And let me

1 tell you this, so here you go you have the right to choose to
2 stand with your community instead of special interest. If
3 you do not I would guarantee you that there's enough of us
4 really pissed off and what it's going to do is that could
5 carry a future thing for treason --

6 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Time's up.

7 MS. LAINGSBURG: -- because you got one job.
8 (Applause.)

9 MS. THRUSH: Good evening and thank you for
10 listening to us and thank everyone for being here. I hadn't
11 really planned on speaking, but when I heard about the --

12 COMMISSIONER: Could you state your name
13 and --

14 MS. THRUSH: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Shanda Thrush
15 and I was born and raised in Alma, Michigan.

16 COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

17 MS. THRUSH: When I heard about the security
18 system at the Warwick Center I just had to say something
19 because I was director of nursing there for a couple of
20 years. And it's, it has one, unless they remodeled it I
21 don't know. But it has one big middle thing and then it has
22 spider units off of the middle thing, there's three of them,
23 okay.

24 And each of the spider units has a lock on their door
25 and then there's another lock on the main facility. If you

1 were to go out that main facility before someone responding
2 from the units would have to come out there by the time you
3 got out there that person's long gone, long gone and
4 especially these young people.

5 Now, when I, also when I worked there more than I'd like
6 to say or admit to a lot of the patients that had dementia if
7 they, if they are out in the open area where they're allowed,
8 were allowed to be they eventually found out the code and
9 opened the door themselves. All right.

10 And so, and then each, each spider web unit thing has an
11 alarm on that, the door in the back and that's alarmed they
12 can also do that, so. And then there is an alarm on the
13 front door I believe.

14 Now I don't know about you, but I don't know if it's
15 legal to keep those individual people locked up. I mean the
16 perimeter of the units, but I don't know about the individual
17 wings you know what I'm saying. That's pretty, I don't know,
18 if I had a kid I wouldn't want him locked up in that unit
19 like that.

20 So that's really all I have to say. I am against the
21 rezoning and I also would ask you to consider that if you do
22 have ties with the Masons in any way, shape or form that you
23 also abstain from voting due to conflict of interest. Thank
24 you.

25 (Applause.)

1 MS. RODRIGUEZ: All right. I'm short here, so
2 here we go. First of all I want to say -- oh, well, my
3 name's Robi Rodriguez I'm from St. Louis. I'd like to say
4 working an extremely physical job in harsh conditions for
5 only \$5.00 an hour sounds a lot like slavery, so let's not,
6 let's not make that sound like it's a good thing.

7 All right. My name's Robi Rodriguez and I'm a resident
8 of Gratiot County. I live 2.7 miles away from the Warwick
9 building. I have four children and I love our cozy, safe
10 family community. I'm here as a concerned citizen, a
11 taxpayer, a patriot and as the State Coordinator for the
12 National Action Task Force.

13 I am appalled at this idea of housing illegal aliens
14 with taxpayer dollars without our consent. We have hundreds
15 of thousands of children in our family foster care system as
16 it is because we don't have enough resources for them. Yet
17 you want to entertain the idea of giving away our children's
18 much needed resources to noncitizens with our money, I don't
19 think so.

20 Let's talk about Greg Mapes and how he needs to be
21 removed due to his conflict of interest. Greg Mapes along
22 with the Masonic Lodge are running the City of Alma like a
23 Monopoly board meanwhile it's a major conflict of interest
24 (applause) (inaudible) when he --

25 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am, how

1 about no more --

2 MS. RODRIGUEZ: This is --

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Seriously.

4 MS. RODRIGUEZ: -- factual information this is
5 not slander.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: But slandering Greg is not
7 what we're here for.

8 MS. RODRIGUEZ: But we can say we're the KKK,
9 really? No I'm going to say (applause) (inaudible) Planning
10 Commission and the City Commission. He also appointed
11 several members on this Planning Commission right now.

12 The legislation that is applicable to conflicts of
13 interest on the part of local public officials where
14 contracts are involved is 1968 PA317. In section 1, no
15 public servant shall be party directly or indirectly to any
16 contract between himself and the public entity of which he is
17 an officer or employee.

18 Section 2, no public servant shall directly or
19 indirectly solicit any contract between the public entity of
20 which he is an officer or an employee and (A) himself (B) any
21 firm meaning copartnership or other unincorporated
22 association of which he is a member, partner or employee.

23 The --

24 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Ma'am, ma'am, could you
25 just move on about your opposition.

1 MS. RODRIGUEZ: The common laws regarding
2 conflict of interest of public officials is found in OAG 1977
3 to 1978 number 5404 page 720.

4 I'm going to cite People -v- Township Board of
5 Overysse. All public officials are agents and their
6 official capacity are fiduciary. They are housed or I'm
7 sorry they are trusted with public functions for the good of
8 the public; to protect, advance and promote its interests not
9 their own. The law will not permit the agent to place
10 himself in a situation in which he may be tempted by his own
11 private interest to disregard that principle.

12 Greg Mapes and any other board member violating this
13 conflict of interest should immediately recuse themselves
14 from any further discussion and (applause) (inaudible) to
15 make a motion concerning Bethany Christian Services and
16 Masonic's Conditional Rezone Proposal. I am also asking that
17 any disqualified members be removed from the quorum which
18 would reduce the amount needed for a majority vote.

19 In the Board opinion number 5516 in the case of
20 Stockholm -v- Township Board of White Lake the vote of the
21 member who's disqualified may not be counted in quorum. By
22 definition quorum means such number of members of a body are
23 legally qualified and competent to act. However in the cases
24 of Wilson, et al -v- Township Board of Red Oak, Smith -v-
25 Woodward, Stockholm -v- Township Board of White Lake the

1 board opinion held that members of the public body who are
2 personally interested are not qualified or competent to act.

3 I ask that the qualifying Planning Commission members
4 make a motion to vote tonight not 30 days from now, you guys
5 have had plenty of time to read our information. If the
6 rezone request makes it to the next level we will be forced
7 to file a lawsuit of which we will also be forced to dig into
8 the Planning Commission and City Commission or any City
9 official that may have any affiliation with the Masonic Lodge
10 or Free Mason (applause).

11 Constitutional attorney Dave (inaudible) has agreed to
12 help us in the event that a lawsuit is needed. He is a great
13 gift, great track record, go look it up. We do not trust our
14 local government and we absolutely do not underestimate your
15 efforts to silence us. But we're warning you do not
16 underestimate us, we are stronger than you think and we will
17 not stop. We have 500 signatures online and on paper and
18 they are continuing to grow. And I am asking you to --

19 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Time's up.

20 MS. RODRIGUEZ: -- vote no and we, the people,
21 have spoken.

22 (Applause.)

23 COMMISSIONER: Okay, quiet please we have the
24 next person. Thank you.

25 MS. FOWL: well, that's a hard act to follow.

1 Do you mind if I take a breath?

2 COMMISSIONER: Sure.

3 MS. FOWL: How about you guys take a breath.
4 My name's Nancy Fowl (ph) I'm a resident of Alma. I've been
5 here for I think about 13 years and I'm just a housewife. I
6 had some remarks, I'm going to toss them because you guys
7 have heard a lot, I think you've heard more than enough. I'm
8 going to make a couple of comments.

9 I am in favor. I would refer you to I think one of the
10 only things that was focused on what you guys are talking
11 about which is a zoning issue and that was comments made by
12 (inaudible), so you can go back to that. And I will not
13 repeat all of that because it's been a long night and you've
14 only got a few more folks yet to talk and I think you
15 probably got a lot of thoughts.

16 The only other thing that I want to comment upon is
17 there have been a lot of things said tonight. All of them
18 are worth listening to, but the ones that you really have to
19 focus on are the ones that are about zoning that you have to
20 make a decision upon. And I will look at the attorney and
21 say you probably have the most knowledge about how to parse
22 out all of those things that were said and what has to do
23 with zoning. I am not an attorney I can't speak to that.

24 The other ones that are top on my mind right now is
25 there was a gentleman here, there were a couple of them that

1 sounded a lot like sub speeches. One of them blamed the
2 Masonic for causing a rift in our community. I will say I
3 strongly disagree. It may have exposed a rift that is in our
4 community, but it has been going on. And I'll look at our
5 Mayor and I don't think you need it recuse yourself from that
6 one (applause).

7 It's something that we all can look at and say we, we
8 care deeply about Alma and we need to address that. I look
9 at things that have been going on since I've been here, I
10 care deeply about our town and I'm sure that everybody here
11 cares deeply about our community and this just reflects some
12 of our deeply held beliefs. And we need to look at how we
13 can try to move forward. We can't live in a town that never
14 changes, our town will continue to move forward and change.

15 I'm not afraid of having a, a center that Bethany
16 Christian Services has there, that doesn't scare me in the
17 least. It's a mile and something from my home, I drive past
18 it all the time, that would be fine. I think it's going to
19 change. I think it will get located some place else and some
20 of the other folks that are afraid what's going to happen
21 that's not going to, you know still going to be in Michigan
22 probably, those you know stories you know.

23 But again this is a zoning issue. This is a conditional
24 use permit if I understand it correctly, your questions have
25 to come back to that one and is this a use that you need to

1 be giving. If you deny that permit for this is it going to
2 affect the future giving of that permit and what does that
3 have to do.

4 Oh, and one last thought. We keep coming back to money
5 like it's a dirty word. I have to consider budgeting for my
6 kid and for his school and for his future needs and every
7 business whether it's a nonprofit or not talks about money.
8 So that is one little diddly thing that bugged me a lot and
9 that's not, you know I know somebody out there's in banking
10 or something. So let's not let that get in the way either.
11 And I thank you all for doing a job that most of us usually
12 ignore and now we're all here seeing you trying to do it.
13 Good luck.

14 (Applause.)

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

16 MS. BALBONICK: Hi, I'm Laura Balbonick (ph) I
17 live in Arcada Township, but work in Alma. I want to start
18 by thanking Bethany Christian and Masonic for their readiness
19 and constant availability throughout this process. I have
20 attended all the public hearings, I have looked at all the
21 information and I really actually want to thank you for being
22 up front. And I also want to thank the Commissioners for
23 their thoughtful attention to the issues and to the people's
24 voice. I'm sure this has been an interesting experience, but
25 this is also one of the things that is in fact beautiful

1 about this country. This country that we live in it's not
2 treason it's democracy and sometimes it's messy. Democracy
3 gives us the right to debate.

4 I agree with some of the previous speakers who noted
5 that this is a zoning issue and I think ultimately not the
6 place to involve national politics. This is about what to do
7 with the warwick Center and the feasibility of that tonight
8 not for advocating Bethany Christian Services but for the
9 specific program that they proposed, a short-term residency
10 program for unaccompanied minors.

11 In my view this proposal does meet with all of those
12 necessary requirements for rezoning and I support it. And
13 while I do respect the desire of many in our community to see
14 more resources to desperate and important local needs I want
15 to urge you to not give into this idea that these young
16 people are illegal aliens.

17 Such framing denies something fundamentally American.
18 Something enshrined in the Statue of Liberty and personally
19 important to my own family history asylum. And asylum is
20 part of many of our own immigrant stories, it's central to
21 mine.

22 My great grandmother arrived in the United States a
23 refugee. She was part of the wave fleeing hardship and
24 terror, violence that was tearing apart her home and her
25 town. She was 15. She arrived alone in this country with

1 the address on a piece of paper of a cousin in Chicago, her
2 only contact in the United States. She was an unaccompanied
3 minor seeking asylum.

4 She was met with hostility and fear because she was
5 Irish and Catholic. The press was full of stories about how
6 this new wave of Irish Catholics were bringing crime, gangs
7 and immorality all of which has been studied extensively
8 sorely. They (inaudible), take resources from citizens and
9 they were not us but they were them. But despite all that
10 she was granted the right to make her case and that became
11 the founding of my family here in America.

12 I love that I live in a country where nonviolent
13 disagreement is possible, it was not for Mary Kelly my great
14 grandmother. We are a strong community we can and will
15 overcome our differences, but we must be mindful of our
16 history.

17 Please make this decision on the merits not on fear.
18 Please consider the integrity of these two nonprofits. I
19 support this proposal because these young people deserve a
20 chance to be heard and to have a chance to make their case.
21 I want to live in a place that still believes in that
22 promise.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. SLAUGHTER: Good evening, I'm
25 Stephany Slaughter, I live here in Alma. And I confess that

1 I spent a lot of today very nervous about today's meeting.
2 My stomach was a bit upset, what was I going to find, what
3 was it going to be like. And actually for the most part I
4 was heartened by the passion of so many community members
5 that truly care about where we live. It's three hours in
6 look how many people are still here, this is pretty amazing.
7 Thank you for listening, thank you for listening to so many
8 different sides.

9 As Laura just mentioned disagreement is actually
10 critical for democracy. And I'm grateful for those who
11 raised questions that have helped me to dig deeper and to
12 consider aspects of this proposal that hadn't occurred to me.
13 I'm grateful for those questions and for that disagreement.
14 I also would say that it solidifies my support for suggesting
15 that the rezoning is the right decision.

16 Now, some folks have brought up community needs,
17 homeless, the needs of the homeless, for veterans, addiction,
18 mental health, senior citizens. And I would like to
19 encourage the Planning Commission and if it's not your
20 purview the City Commission to look at those problems
21 seriously. Our community is concerned and we should do a
22 needs assessment and looking to see how are we serving those
23 members of our community.

24 But that's not what's before you today, you're not
25 offered an either/or proposition. You have a clear proposal

1 in front of you and it is in reference to rezoning. And as
2 was mentioned earlier part of the question is also about
3 precedent.

4 Now, I may be misunderstanding and please correct me if
5 I am, but this conditional rezoning request is very similar
6 to the conditional rezoning that was permitted at the same
7 facility previously. In which case oh, with different
8 residents of course, but it's a very similar proposition.
9 Did I misunderstand that? You can't answer that, okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: This is not a conversation
11 style.

12 MS. SLAUGHTER: Okay, got it.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Sorry.

14 MS. SLAUGHTER: Consider the precedence then.
15 I would like to address the question of the legal standing of
16 the children and I'll give a little bit of background that
17 may or may not be helpful, but to frame the fact that when we
18 moved to Alma we came from Mexico City. We've lived here
19 since 2008. We've gone through the immigration process for
20 my husband to become a citizen and we understand the
21 complexities of the system, the length of time, the money
22 required.

23 These children have legal presence, presence in the U.S.
24 while pursuing legal status, for many of them this will be
25 asylum. And asylum is something that the U.S. has entered

1 into international treaties to uphold. It also would be
2 helpful to clarify that according to US CIS even those who
3 are in the U.S. illegally are legally eligible to apply for
4 asylum. I bring that up because there was so many questions
5 about the legal presence.

6 I've interpreted for unaccompanied minors in Michigan in
7 both the situation where they were requesting asylum and when
8 they were requesting special immigrant juvenile status. I
9 can attest to how rigorous those processes are.

10 I've worked also with Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
11 as a volunteer for the past five years. And have had the
12 opportunity of asking questions about their experiences
13 working with Bethany to have a better understanding of is
14 Bethany capable of doing what they propose, which should be
15 part of the rezoning question. They're asking for use of a
16 facility, are they able to fulfill what they're saying they
17 can fulfill in that facility and I'm convinced that they can
18 do that.

19 Our immigration system requires that unaccompanied
20 minors from noncontiguous countries, so excluding Canada and
21 Mexico, who pass a (inaudible) interview that they will be
22 (inaudible) return to their countries of origin have the
23 right to make their case through our legal immigration
24 process. And that they be placed in the least restricted
25 environment as (inaudible) while they navigate that process.

1 That's where Bethany comes in with the program that they are
2 proposing.

3 while I recognize the decision on this proposed project
4 is complex and involves many different factors one factor of
5 particular concern is some of the ways this project has been
6 discussed that paints our community as unwelcoming
7 (inaudible) to the point that we must ask is our community
8 safe for these children. we should be concerned about the
9 message that the language of the objection sends and the way
10 it constructs Alma as an unwelcoming community. As a
11 community that's unwilling to break through diversities that
12 are already here. This will also have ripple affects as we
13 seek to recruit students, employees and businesses to
14 contribute to our local economy.

15 Our community is stronger with immigrants. Regardless
16 of the different political views we have about immigration
17 the fact is that humane treatment of minors in the system is
18 not only the right thing to do it's required by law under the
19 Fourth Amendment. And Bethany is recognized as a legitimate
20 provider capable of enacting the program they propose in
21 compliance with (inaudible). Please move their request to
22 rezone the Warwick building forward. This proposal is both
23 good for the children and our community. Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. SMITH: Hello and good evening. Special

1 thank you to the Commission for having us all here today to
2 be able to have this dialogue. My name is Jackie Smith and I
3 was born and raised in Alma, Michigan I'm currently a
4 resident of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. So I'm here today to
5 discuss a few things. I'd first like to say we did not have
6 a land acknowledgement this evening which I think is an
7 important part of Michigan history. So to acknowledge that
8 we are in fact standing on stolen land here in Alma and all
9 of Michigan (applause).

10 So now that that is done I wish to acknowledge that we
11 have been here for several hours, do I have a lot more to
12 give you than other people have said no. I'm also not an
13 expert on zoning, I'm not going to tell you what your job is
14 you know that better than I do. What I am going to do is
15 talk about a couple of things that were mentioned here that
16 were just blatantly wrong.

17 I do also want to mention as a life long resident of
18 Alma I care a lot about this community. My family has lived
19 in Alma for over six or the Alma/Gratiot County/Montcalm
20 County area for over six generations. But I'm also the
21 daughter of a Mexican immigrant, a proud daughter of a
22 formerly undocumented immigrant in our community.

23 I was able to in my time in Alma be educated by some of
24 the wonderful people that we had speak today. Maria Varteer
25 was one of my teachers, Elizabeth Campbell who's here was one

1 of my teachers. I love this community. I was also able to
2 receive medical care from Dr. Lozee (ph) growing up.

3 I would like to mention that because I think it's
4 important for us to remember as community members what's,
5 what folks can contribute to our community. A lot of members
6 of our community that provide care for us, that care for our
7 children and care for our elders are in fact immigrants. And
8 come from lots of different backgrounds and have a lot of
9 different experiences.

10 I will also say that my time in Alma as a daughter of an
11 immigrant shaped my career. I had a very unique experience
12 growing up here. I recall distinctly on the playground in
13 fifth grade being yelled at by children and chased around the
14 playground yelling alien at me because they knew about my
15 mom's background. It continued and persisted through high
16 school where I was cornered in one of the corners here in
17 Alma High School and someone yelled at me and cornered me and
18 said border jumper over and over again until I cried.

19 These experiences showed me before what most people
20 would consider the political mindset to the extreme, right?
21 It showed me what was yet to come. And because of those
22 experiences I knew that small town America had a long way to
23 go, a very long way to go.

24 When I eventually went to Central Michigan University
25 after I graduated from Alma High School I studied political

1 science. And I got very involved with the political movement
2 there and I have since worked in politics at a national
3 level, state level, most recently worked on a federal
4 campaign.

5 I say that because the way we treat people when they're
6 young, when they're growing up in a community can have two
7 different affects on them, right? They can learn from them
8 and want to do good in the world. They could see Alma as the
9 place where they were able to find a home, where they were
10 able to find shelter, right? When you're, you have faced
11 severe issues in your life and you go door-to-door knocking
12 looking to see who will take you in we want to be that
13 community, at least in my eyes we do.

14 I was raised in a very Christian home, I was raised in a
15 Christian community so I thought. And I want to remind folks
16 that that's the same as Jesus, right? We go door-to-door
17 looking for a place to stay for a refuge the same way that
18 Mary and Joseph did. And that's the story of these immigrant
19 children looking for someone who will refuge them.

20 I also want to mention that as a student of history
21 change is hard, right, I acknowledge that. I think all of us
22 know that you know the civil rights movement wasn't easy. As
23 a lot of us in this room would say yeah we're not racist and
24 that's great, but sometimes our mindset is set in a way that
25 we can't see when we are being racist; right? And a lot of

1 the things that have been said today are racially motivated.
2 And I'd like to just mention that we should question not who
3 we are as individuals, but where we want Alma to be seen on
4 the national scale, on the statewide scale.

5 And the last thing I'll mention is a lot of talk of
6 taxes. Whether or not these folks are being placed in
7 Michigan, in Wisconsin, in Texas that's going to be coming
8 out of our tax dollars.

9 I would like to mention that all of the issues I heard
10 today except for the issue of zoning cannot be taken care of
11 at this commission, but at the federal level. So if you care
12 about that go to those meetings, talk to your congressman, go
13 knock on John Moolenaar's door.

14 (Applause.)

15 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

16 MR. GILLOCK: Good evening. My name is
17 Ryan Gillock (ph), I've been a citizen of Alma for 10 years.
18 And I wasn't sure whether I wanted to come up here tonight or
19 not, but I didn't want to go home tonight with any regrets.
20 So first of all thank you to each and every one of you for
21 taking the time to listen to each person's concerns.

22 I am a grateful employee of Michigan Masonic Home.
23 Masonic Home has provided a good living for me, the good Lord
24 has blessed me with a wife and family that I absolutely do
25 not deserve, but he blessed me anyway. Those children are

1 the love of my life. Their safety -- and to see them grow
2 into young, good men, contribute to society, good Christian
3 men is utmost importance to me.

4 I don't blame Michigan Masonic Home for what prompted
5 their transaction. Like a lot of businesses last year with
6 Covid and our society's lack of work ethics Masonic has
7 probably weathered some good storms. That being said as I
8 mentioned I have three boys and I can't imagine if they went
9 through what some of these children possibly have gone
10 through, I cannot imagine that. But sadly despite all the
11 things that could be happening to those children I don't
12 think that's the main reason for this proposal.

13 Someone very intelligent with a different opinion than
14 me could try till they're blue in the face to say that this
15 is about compassion, this is about mercy, this is about the
16 welfare of these children. And I'm sure that the, I'm sorry
17 the other organization I can't think of --

18 THE SPEAKER: Bethany.

19 MR. GILLOCK: Bethany, thank you. I'm sure
20 they have some goodwill, but you cannot convince me that the
21 bottom line is not money (applause).

22 When you start a business, right, they say the three
23 most important things are location, location, location,
24 right. That's usually what they say. So I'm asking you
25 tonight, each one of you, when you go to look at the proposal

1 for this zoning law that the first three things that would
2 come to your mind will be safety, safety, safety, right? The
3 safety for future employers of Alma, possible safety of
4 families considering relocating to Alma and certainly last
5 but not least the current safety of the proud current
6 citizens of Alma, Michigan.

7 I'm not up here with a political platform, I'm not up
8 here to threaten you with lawsuits I'm just asking you
9 please, each and every one of you please strongly consider
10 the safety of our community (applause). Thank you so much
11 for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

13 MS. GARCIA: Good evening. My name is Marissa
14 (inaudible) Garcia and I work for the Michigan Department of
15 Civil Rights in Lansing, Michigan. As part --

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Your city, hometown?

17 MS. GARCIA: My hometown Lowell, Michigan.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

19 MS. GARCIA: As part of the public comment
20 process I would like to offer the comments below on behalf of
21 the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Michigan
22 Department of Civil Rights for Alma's Planning Commission
23 consideration. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the
24 Michigan Department of Civil Rights are responsible for
25 protecting the civil rights of all people residing in

1 Michigan.

2 Michigan law prohibits a broad range of practices in
3 public service and housing including zoning decisions which
4 discriminate against individuals based on several protected
5 classes such as race, religion, color, national origin, age,
6 sex, disability, marital status and familial status.

7 The Michigan Masonic Home requested the conditional
8 rezone of a parcel of land located at 842 Warwick Drive from
9 the current zoning classification in order to allow the
10 property to function conditionally as an unaccompanied
11 children's program with CI, campus institutional zoning
12 district. A denial of that rezoning request would prohibit
13 unaccompanied refugee minor children from residing on the
14 property.

15 If any of the basis just mentioned are taken into
16 account in the decision to deny approval of the conditional
17 rezoning then the decision may constitute unlawful
18 discrimination. We want to ensure that the Zoning Board
19 refrains from making decisions based upon any of the above
20 referenced protected classes or to act on fears, stereotypes
21 or unfounded assumptions about prospective residents moving
22 here. Thank you for your time.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. BERGAURD: My name is Lauren Berguard
25 (ph), I was raised in St. Louis, Michigan from a child. I

1 was a ward of the state, so I know what that's like. My
2 grandparents on both sides were immigrants, so I know about
3 that too. I was raised on stories, but these stories were
4 true. They were based on truth and experience of what
5 happens when you twist that truth or you say you're telling
6 the truth when it's not the truth.

7 When this first started this meeting you put up on the
8 screen for us about Jesus, how he would want us to take and
9 have humanitarian services hook up with government. You
10 don't know your Bible, Jesus never hooked up with government.
11 And he never told his disciples to hook up with the
12 government. We know what the government is because the Bible
13 tells what the government is.

14 To the people that work in the government that are good
15 people, good honest people, people that tell the truth and
16 not only tell the truth but they live the truth. That used
17 to be, that, that's a has been because people in government
18 we say this is many things.

19 It started about, well, if you want to go to the second
20 step after Jesus setting up his humanitarian system with the
21 government. We were told that an agency, a Christian agency
22 wants to bring these children here and it's for safety. We
23 know that ain't true because as many as given you statistics
24 our country is anything but safe.

25 How do I know that I lived in Grand Rapids, I lived up

1 on the northwest side. The only reason why my daughter
2 wasn't abducted by a sexual pervert was because she was smart
3 enough to step out of her shoe that he had grabbed ahold of.
4 This man started out flashing third graders at my daughter's
5 school.

6 They let him out repeatedly, they would arrest him they
7 would let him out. He'd go right back to school and he'd
8 flash these third graders. How did that story end since
9 we're short on stories he abducted a third grader took her to
10 the top of the ballpark zoo, held a knife to her throat and
11 raped her then took her back to the school.

12 No, we ain't bringing these children over here to
13 safety. I wouldn't send my child to any country that's not
14 safe. And we know all, we know the truth that our country's
15 anything but safe. If that was true we wouldn't be split do
16 we keep our guns or don't we keep our guns. I agree we
17 shouldn't keep our guns if we're going to take and kill each
18 other, but I do agree we better keep our guns if our
19 government's going to lie to us (applause).

20 Let's stick to the first one truth, truth. This ain't
21 about the children we went full circle and finally got back
22 to zoning.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you, your time's up.
24 Appreciate it.

25 MS. BERGAURD: I wish to God your time was up.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. KRUPP: All right, interesting. My name
3 is Eric Krupp (ph), I live in Alma with my wife and three
4 children. I live a little over a mile from the facility in
5 question. So first I want to thank everybody for their time
6 tonight, thank you for your patience and providing an
7 opportunity to talk, to speak. I did not intend to speak,
8 but was inspired to do so by all those who spoke before me so
9 I wrote down a few thoughts.

10 I'd like to voice my support for the rezoning effort
11 simply because I believe it's what is best for the community.
12 I will not resort to calling those I disagree with racist or
13 ignorant and I certainly won't attempt to weaponize my faith
14 or my politics to bolster my argument. With the exception of
15 the politician who arrived late, made a short speech and left
16 shortly afterwards I still have respect for my friends and
17 neighbors who differ from me and my opinions.

18 Citizens have a First Amendment right to share your
19 opinions and there's nothing wrong with that, it's actually
20 one of the great things about our country. I believe the
21 Commission has a responsibility to listen to everyone who
22 speaks and to do so without bias.

23 I also believe the Commission is responsible for making
24 decisions in Alma's best interest and to do so without being
25 influenced by emotional pleas, loud voices or threats of

1 lawsuits. And it should definitely not worry about the
2 opposing group continuing to fight for their cause if things
3 don't go their way because let's face it that's going to
4 happen regardless of what you decide tonight or later on,
5 whenever you decide that.

6 So with that I wish you the best of luck in your
7 decision and I look forward to continuing to work with you
8 for the betterment of our community. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. LANG: Hi, my name is Barbara Lang and I
12 had something all prepared to say, but it just seems like all
13 that has kind of gone out the window. It seems to me that
14 this is really a question about what is best for the
15 unaccompanied minors that have come into our country.
16 Bethany --

17 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Could you, could you state
18 your residence for us please?

19 MS. LANG: Yes. Alma, Michigan.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

21 MS. LANG: Yes. Bethany Christian Services
22 says they are here so we need to take care of them. Alma is
23 1500 to 3,000 miles away from any U.S. border. A good share
24 of them have family to return to in their own home country.
25 I think that Bethany Christian Services really needs to be

1 closer to the border to take care of these kids.

2 There actually is a process to reunify unaccompanied
3 children with their family already in the system. When
4 Bethany Christian Services brings those children 1500 to
5 3,000 miles away from their, from our border it's taking them
6 further away from where their homes are. What do you say to
7 the child who says when can I go home. If they're this much
8 further away from home I think you're causing them more
9 difficulty than positive (applause).

10 I do also, the one thing that you know if this was a
11 home where the kids were really being nurtured that would be
12 different. It would be a totally different addition to our
13 community, but these kids are just passing through. They're
14 not going to be an addition to our country, they're not going
15 to be, I don't believe we can really even help them that much
16 more. If they were treated near the border where they're
17 coming through I think that that would be just a better way
18 to handle it.

19 And that's not, I'm not afraid of them. My husband and
20 I have both traveled extensively south of the border. We
21 love the people there. We've tried diligently to try and
22 speak Spanish to little avail. But I just think that in this
23 situation I really oppose the facility here, I just don't
24 think that it's fair to the children (applause).

25 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

1 MS. SMITH: Hi, my name is Elena Smith. I am
2 from Coleman and from Midland, but I work full-time in Alma
3 as a medical social worker. And I'm pretty invested in the
4 community, have considered buying a house here on many
5 occasions.

6 I thought that there would be a lot of good discussion
7 tonight and I was prepared for a lot of back and forth, but
8 honestly this discussion wasn't what my concerns were about.
9 I was concerned about are there sufficient educational
10 resources for children who speak multiple languages in this
11 community, are there going to be sufficient teachers, are
12 there going to be sufficient translators.

13 Are there going to be sufficient paraprofessionals that are going
14 to be able to communicate with these kids, are there going to
15 be a sufficient amount of therapists, counselors who are
16 trained in trauma focused therapies. Are there sufficient
17 caregivers who are also being trained in these trauma focused
18 things.

19 I spent a lot of years being a, becoming a social worker
20 and a lot of years learning how to work with children who
21 have experienced severe trauma and generational trauma and so
22 that's more of what my concerns were. I have concerns as a
23 social worker with Bethany Christian Services, but that
24 hasn't really been what we have talked about. Instead I've
25 heard a lot of really concerning and honestly appalling

1 comments that have pretty much struck me.

2 And so I'll just kind of try to tie it together by
3 telling two little short stories from my life. My sister is
4 named Cza (ph) and she, we adopted her when she was a year
5 and a half old from Russia. She's half Russian, half
6 Chinese. And she grew up in Coleman and we never thought
7 that would be an issue and it was, particularly with the last
8 election.

9 She was called a Russian spy, she was called a
10 terrorist, she was repeatedly physically assaulted in her
11 school causing her to drop out of school. She eventually
12 moved to a place that was more inclusive and was able to
13 finish high school there. She now is part of a military
14 family and lives in a big multicultural city and is finally
15 feeling acceptance there.

16 Another story is I worked all the way through college
17 while I was getting my BSW and my MSW. I worked at an adult
18 foster care home in a small rural community as well, in
19 Auburn, Michigan. And the, and the community or the house
20 where I worked, the house where I worked at was an adult
21 foster care home in a, just a little, a little drive just one
22 of many houses.

23 And when people were talking about having that house
24 come there there was this same backlash. We don't want those
25 people in our community, they could be dangerous, what, we

1 don't know their histories. Many of them came from literally
2 an asylum, from the Traverse City asylum when they came to
3 live in this, in the house. And there was so many concerns
4 about would it be safe, would it lower property values, how
5 does it affect the community.

6 And the house has been there for 11 years and the
7 scariest thing my residents do and did every year was when we
8 made cookies and went and dropped them off at the doors of
9 the neighbors. And I mean sometimes we even had garage
10 sales, I mean it was pretty terrifying.

11 So I can say that they not knowing who these people were
12 with mental illness and physical disabilities coming into
13 their community and then they gave it a try and it's worked
14 out. And they're now a vital part of the community, the
15 neighbors all know their names. They wave hi to them when
16 we're out in the yard playing and it's like that with a lot
17 of things.

18 And so yeah I just wanted to bring that up just as an
19 example of what can happen when maybe all those bad things
20 don't happen, maybe it all does work out. And I know I'm a
21 social worker and so, I'm like a millennial and so I'm
22 eternally optimistic but those are just my thoughts. And I
23 want to strongly encourage you to support this change in
24 proposal. Thank you.

25 (Applause.)

1 MS. HALL: Good evening. My name is
2 Bernadette Hall, I live on Luce Road Alma, Michigan. I've
3 lived here for all my life, a little over 74 years. I'd like
4 to thank you for allowing me to speak tonight last but not
5 least I guess. But I realize there are many concerns
6 regarding this rezoning issue put forth to the Board by
7 Masonic Pathways for leasing to Bethany Christian Services,
8 okay.

9 I've listened to many comments both negative and
10 positive from community members, some nice some not so nice.
11 But I'd like to say when I walked in here tonight most
12 everyone was standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance
13 to our flag. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United
14 States of America and to the Republic for which it stands one
15 nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for
16 all.

17 Okay. why am I reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to our
18 flag, let me tell you. Among these many concerns is one
19 testimony regarding a United States soldier. wasn't brought
20 up tonight, but it was one that I had heard through all of
21 this. He was a veteran I believe of the Vietnam war from
22 this community, okay.

23 He was in need of care, sought residence at the Warwick
24 Center owned by Masonic Pathways. However this American,
25 this taxpaying American citizen, soldier who fought for our

1 country, our community was told he would have to look
2 elsewhere as Masonic was closing the Warwick Center they had
3 no room for him. An American soldier, an American citizen.

4 Then as if to add insult to injury just a few months
5 later we hear Masonic Pathways, in need of recouping dollars
6 lost from an unsuccessful business endeavor, wanted to lease
7 the same Warwick Center to Bethany Christian Services to
8 house illegal, illegals who have crossed our border illegally
9 with total disregard of our laws. The same laws that this
10 American citizen, soldier fought to uphold.

11 We, taxpaying citizens pledge our allegiance to uphold
12 the laws of our land for our citizens. Soldiers such as
13 these have fought for the liberty to obtain justice for all
14 of our citizens. These illegals broke our laws first by
15 crossing our borders illegally and now Masonic Pathways and
16 Bethany Christian Services want you to assist them in this
17 illegal transaction by approving their rezoning request.

18 I would like to quote from the Book of Proverbs Chapter
19 1 Versus 8-19. My son, if sinners entice you do not give
20 into them. If they say come along with us, let's lie in wait
21 for someone's blood, let's ambush some harmless soul. Let's
22 swallow them alive like the grave, like those who go down to
23 the pit. We will get all sorts of valuable things and fill
24 our houses with plunder. Throw in your lap with us and we
25 will share a common purse.

1 But God said my son do not go along with them, do not
2 set foot on their paths for their feet rush into sin. They
3 are swift to shed blood. How useless to spread a net. These
4 men lie in wait for their own blood. Such is the end of all
5 who go after ill-gotten gain, it takes away the lives of
6 those who get it.

7 So I urge you to deny this rezoning for the good of our
8 families and the safety and well-being of our community.
9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

12 MS. CASTLE: I wasn't going to get up here,
13 but I want to tell you guys that I live at Pathways, on the
14 grounds of Pathways. It's a wonderful place to live. I feel
15 that they have made a mistake --

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Can we have your name
17 please.

18 MS. CASTLE: Oh, I'm sorry I'm Sandy Castle
19 (ph) I live on Pathways. I feel like they've made a mistake
20 in doing this. And we do not, there's at least 95 percent of
21 us that live out there that do not agree with it. We have
22 wonderful people that run our staff, our staff is wonderful,
23 but I don't know what made them think of doing this. They
24 said they just couldn't sell it.

25 Anyway I, I just -- so many of your people have

1 complained about the Masons and it is not the Masons. I mean
2 there are a few Masons that are making these decisions, but a
3 lot of these people today have and the other day when I was
4 at the meeting they just criticized the whole Masonic Lodge.
5 Please don't tell them that the Masons are that bad. There's
6 just, this to me is a mistake.

7 But the rest of our Masons, my husband's a Mason, I'm an
8 Eastern Star and I love the organization and I love our
9 Masons. And this is not a Masonic thing this is just the
10 Masonic Home, okay?

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you.

13 THE SPEAKER: My name is Duane and I'm an
14 American citizen.

15 COMMISSIONER: Duane, can you state your last
16 name and address please?

17 THE SPEAKER: No. I live in the United
18 States. So I'm open for public meeting, Open Meetings Act;
19 right? Thank you. So I was appalled that you guys didn't do
20 the Pledge of Allegiance and there's not even a flag in this
21 room. I've been to over a dozen school board meetings in the
22 last three months and I'm finding the same thing. Anybody on
23 this board over 30 which I believe is probably nearly every
24 one of you should be ashamed of yourselves. You guys were
25 raised, excuse me you people on this board were raised during

1 the time that I was raised most of them. I'm ashamed of you
2 guys for not having a flag and not having it (applause).

3 So much of the people of this community and all over
4 Michigan, I've attended school boards all over we're
5 educating you guys because you guys apparently can't educate
6 yourselves. We had someone earlier reading laws to you and
7 the attorney knew well enough to keep you quiet because she
8 was telling the truth. She knew the laws, she knew what you
9 guys are doing was wrong and she stated it.

10 The conflict of interest here is going on. I think the
11 attorney told this fella that's on your board that he should
12 recuse himself and admit to the fact that he's part of it
13 because the people of this community know that, so they're
14 going to bring it up anyway. But he should recuse himself,
15 he should have done it at the very start of this meeting. He
16 should have no play in this decision whatsoever.

17 The other thing is a person about four or five people
18 before me, I won't say it was a man or woman because gender
19 stuff nowadays gets you in trouble. He stated several
20 different conditions that you must follow the law otherwise
21 you could be found for discrimination. The only thing I
22 didn't hear them mention citizenship. They're telling you
23 the things that you should be aware of, but they aren't
24 telling you the things that they don't want you to think of.
25 Pay attention to what you're not learning.

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you. I don't see
3 anyone else. Last call. You want to -- with that I'll
4 entertain a motion to close the public hearing and we'll do a
5 roll call vote please, Aeric.

6 COMMISSIONER: Motion --

7 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Just a second. Did you
8 want to speak, ma'am?

9 THE SPEAKER: I have a very short message. I
10 have been sick all week about this, I've been --

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Name for --

12 THE SPEAKER: Shirley Jean, Alma. Anyway I
13 was not going to say anything, but the Lord put it in my
14 heart to say something because you're representing me and I'm
15 representing my Savior. And there is going to be a revival,
16 there's going to be a jubilee, we don't know when but God is
17 running this country whether you like it or not. It's not
18 Biden, it's not Trump it's the good Lord.

19 And he's going to touch every one of us and you're going
20 to know it is God. This is God's country. He gave it to us
21 and we have dismantled this place beyond recognition. I can
22 imagine how broken his heart is. Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: With that entertain a
25 motion to close the public hearing.

1 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: So move.

2 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Second.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Got motion and support.

4 All those in favor say aye and we'll do a roll call vote
5 please.

6 MR. RIPLEY: Yes. All right. Wheeler?

7 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Yes.

8 MR. RIPLEY: Therrien?

9 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Yes.

10 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

11 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

12 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

13 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Yes.

14 MR. RIPLEY: Pitts?

15 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Yes.

16 MR. RIPLEY: Schooley?

17 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Yes.

18 MR. RIPLEY: And Richter?

19 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

20 MR. RIPLEY: Motion carries, public hearing is
21 closed.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you very much,

23 Aeric. All right. Now the next part of this Planning

24 Commission is responsible to make a recommendation to the

25 City Commission on the conditional rezoning request. There

1 are four options for this meeting. Recommend approval of the
2 conditional rezoning request to the City Commission,
3 recommend approval of the conditional rezoning request with
4 changes to the City Commission.

5 Recommend denial of the conditional rezoning request to
6 the City Commission or we may motion to table the
7 recommendation to consider all the comments made during the
8 public comment and letters provided. The tabled motion could
9 be reopened at the next Planning Commission meeting on
10 Monday, August 2nd or a special meeting could be scheduled.
11 So what's your pleasure?

12 COMMISSIONER MAPES: I'd like to make a motion
13 that we move to accept the conditional rezoning and move
14 forward with recommendation for approval to the City
15 commission.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I have a motion.

17 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: I support.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: All right.

19 MR. RIPLEY: Motion and support for the
20 recommendation approval to recommend to the City Commission.
21 Therrien?

22 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Yes.

23 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

24 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: No.

25 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

1 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Yes.

2 MR. RIPLEY: Pitts?

3 COMMISSIONER PITTS: No.

4 MR. RIPLEY: Schooley?

5 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: No.

6 MR. RIPLEY: Richter?

7 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

8 MR. RIPLEY: And wheeler?

9 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: No.

10 MR. RIPLEY: Motion does not carry.

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: This now goes to the City
13 Commission for their consideration, okay. Everybody needs to
14 understand that there will be --

15 MR. RIPLEY: This motion didn't carry.

16 MR. COSTANZO: You voted against the motion.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: I'm sorry against moving
18 it to the City Commission for approval. I screwed that up
19 sorry. We still have three other options, so anybody want to
20 make a motion on one of the other options?

21 COMMISSIONER PITTS: I make a motion that we
22 deny the --

23 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: All right. I have a
24 motion to deny. Doesn't appear to be any support. So the
25 other one would be with changes or the other one would be to

1 table it, so --

2 MR. RIPLEY: The former motion died at the
3 table with no second just so everyone's aware.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: So we either have to table
5 it or recommend approval with changes to the City Commission.

6 COMMISSIONER MAPES: I would like to make a
7 second motion if I could please. I would like to move that
8 we move or that we recommend approval of, recommend moving to
9 the City Commission with the additional condition that the
10 conditional zoning be in effect and allowed for three years
11 then it will be re-examined.

12 THE SPEAKERS: No.

13 THE SPEAKER: You shouldn't even be on there.

14 THE SPEAKER: It's a slap in the face. Did
15 you ask the citizens and this guy should be recusing
16 himself --

17 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Sir.

18 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: I would make a motion
19 to table --

20 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Mark. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: I would make a motion
22 to table this for further discussion. We took a lot of
23 information in tonight there should be a portion to be
24 evaluated.

25 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: I'll support it.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Greg, it looks like your's
2 went down without support. I have a motion to table and
3 support, so we'll do a roll call vote.

4 MR. RIPLEY: Roll call vote again. Therrien?

5 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Yes.

6 MR. RIPLEY: Ayers?

7 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

8 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

9 COMMISSIONER MAPES: No.

10 MR. RIPLEY: Pitts?

11 COMMISSIONER PITTS: No.

12 MR. RIPLEY: Schooley?

13 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Yes.

14 MR. RIPLEY: Richter?

15 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

16 MR. RIPLEY: And wheeler?

17 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Yes.

18 MR. RIPLEY: That motion passes 5-2. It is
19 now tabled. The motion is, recommendation is tabled.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Do we want to set a date
21 for the next one at this time? I need a motion for that,
22 correct?

23 MR. RIPLEY: Our next regular scheduled, our
24 next scheduled hearing, public meeting with Planning
25 Commission is August 2nd. So we could pick this up again at

1 that time without scheduling a new hearing or anything like
2 that, it is a public meeting.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Is everybody okay with
4 that or do we want to, does somebody want to make a motion to
5 have a special meeting or --

6 MR. COSTANZO: It doesn't have to happen, you
7 can take this up at the August 2nd meeting and you can set up
8 a special meeting later. We don't need a motion.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: You want to tell the crowd
10 that I don't know if they heard you.

11 MR. COSTANZO: You don't, you don't have to
12 make a motion for a special meeting tonight. You can, you
13 can, as long as you put it out on the agenda when you're
14 supposed to, if you decide to rethink this August 2nd you put
15 it out these folks can come back. It won't be a public
16 hearing but, it won't be public comment. Or you can set up a
17 special meeting the way you're supposed to notice it up and
18 decide it then. There doesn't need to be a motion on that
19 today.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you. So any other
21 business here?

22 MR. RIPLEY: No, we have no other business
23 tonight.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you. I'll entertain
25 a motion to adjourn the meeting.

1 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Motion.

2 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Motion from wheeler.

3 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Support.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Support. All those in
5 favor say aye.

6 PLANNING COMMISSION: Aye.

7 MR. RIPLEY: Roll call vote to close it out.
8 Ayers?

9 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Yes.

10 MR. RIPLEY: Mapes?

11 COMMISSIONER MAPES: Yes.

12 MR. RIPLEY: wheeler?

13 COMMISSIONER WHEELER: Yes.

14 MR. RIPLEY: Pitts?

15 COMMISSIONER PITTS: Yes.

16 MR. RIPLEY: Schooley?

17 COMMISSIONER SCHOOLEY: Yes.

18 MR. RIPLEY: Richter?

19 COMMISSIONER RICHTER: Yes.

20 MR. RIPLEY: And Therrien?

21 COMMISSIONER THERRIEN: Yes.

22 MR. RIPLEY: Meeting is closed.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYERS: Thank you and thank you to
24 everyone.

25 (Meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.)

1 STATE OF MICHIGAN)
 2)
 3 COUNTY OF GRATIOT)
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10 I certify that this transcript, consisting of
 11 155 pages, is a complete, true, and correct record of the
 12 proceedings held on July 12th, 2021 to the best of my
 13 ability.

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7-22-2021

Robin Alvis Doan

Date

Robin Alvis Doan, CSR 5650
 Notary Public, Saginaw County
 Acting in Gratiot County
 My Commission Expires 2-20-25