

MINUTES OF THE BIG DARBY ACCORD ADVISORY PANEL
Tuesday, August 18, 2026

The Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel convened at the Michael G. Coleman Government Center, Room 204, 111 North Front Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 1:15 p.m.

Members' Present

- Ashley Hoyer, Chairman
- Melissa Brinkerhoff
- Anthony Sasson
- Mike Reeves
- Paul Denton
- Leo Almeida

Members' Absent

- Dr. Gordon
- Mr. Gara

Staff Present

- Hunter Rayfield, City of Columbus Planning Division
- Christopher Lohr, City of Columbus Planning Division

Also Present

- Michael Huber, Esq., Applicant Representative
- Richard Lester, CESO Representative
- Mark Connor, Forestar
- Tom Haines, Neighboring Property Owner
- Bob Gable, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Stream Restoration
- Raimere Fitzpatrick, Franklin County Environmental Development and Planning

Chairman Hoyer called the August meeting of the Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel to order at 1:15 p.m., apologizing for the delay in starting. Mr. Rayfield conducted the roll call. Dr. Gordon, Mr. Gara, and Mr. Sasson did not initially answer, and a quorum of five members was declared present. Mr. Rayfield and Mr. Lohr introduced themselves as staff of the City of Columbus Planning Division.

The Panel considered the minutes of the June 9, 2026, meeting. Mr. Almeida moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Reeves seconded the motion. During the roll call, the record was corrected to reflect that Mr. Sasson was now present, bringing attendance to six members. Upon roll call, Ms. Brinkerhoff abstained, as she had not been present at the June 9, 2026, meeting; Mr. Reeves,

Mr. Almeida, Mr. Denton, and Chairman Hoye voted in favor. The minutes of the June 9, 2026, meeting were approved by a vote of four in favor, with one abstention.

Before proceeding to New Business, Mr. Lohr read into the record a statement from Deputy Director Brian Clark of the City of Columbus regarding the relationship between the 2006 Big Darby Accord, applicable state and local environmental regulations, and the draft Big Darby Accord Amendment ("BDAA"). The statement noted that the City has adopted administrative policy to implement the site-specific protections of the draft BDAA on an interim basis while jurisdictions continue their deliberations toward a final amendment, and commended Prairie Township as the first jurisdiction to adopt the BDAA.

Chairman Hoye confirmed with staff that today's review of Case AP-26-07 was conceptual only and not subject to a vote, and that the Panel would evaluate the case under the City of Columbus's amended document rather than the 2006 document. Ms. Brinkerhoff noted that the Panel had received a letter from the Darby Creek Association, and stated that the Brown Township Trustees had, the previous evening, unanimously passed a motion directing her to evaluate cases before the Panel under the 2006 Big Darby Accord until the BDAA is formally adopted. Chairman Hoye asked staff to ensure the full Panel is clear on which document applies to a given case, and Mr. Lohr responded that, for this particular case, the recommendations under either document are similar, and that members may state which plan they are applying when offering comments.

The Panel then moved to New Business: Case AP-26-07, 3030 Norton Road, also known as the Bolton Field Residential Subdivision. Mr. Rayfield presented the staff report on behalf of the City of Columbus Planning Division.

Mr. Rayfield reported that City of Columbus rezoning action Z26-027 has been filed to permit single-unit development divided into four subareas, and that today's review is conceptual only. The site is located in the southwest corner of the City, is currently vacant agricultural land, is bordered by existing single-unit residential development, is adjacent to land owned by the Columbus Regional Airport Authority for the Bolton Field Airfield and includes a portion of the Hellbranch Run along its western edge.

Mr. Rayfield reported that the site is currently zoned R-1 on the western-two parcels and Rural on the eastern parcel, and that the proposed PUD-6 rezoning would allow construction of 374 single-family units across the four subareas, along with an AR-1 apartment residential area. He noted that the AR-1 subarea and part of Subarea 2 lie outside the Big Darby Watershed boundary and are therefore outside the Panel's review.

Mr. Rayfield reviewed an exhibit showing the watershed boundary and identified an unnamed stream at the northwest corner of the site as LaValley Ditch. He reported that the BDAA recommends the site for Neighborhood 1, with a density guideline of one to four dwelling units

per acre, and that the proposed density of 2.83 dwelling units per acre is consistent with that recommendation.

Mr. Rayfield reviewed the Primary and Secondary Conservation Areas shown on the site, and the proposed unit distribution among the four subareas: 91 units in Subarea 1, 106 in Subarea 2, 124 in Subarea 3, and 50 in Subarea 4. He noted that Subarea 1 and roughly half of Subarea 2 lie outside the watershed boundary, and that the in-watershed density within Subareas 2, 3, and 4 could be as low as 1.9 units per acre, subject to confirmation.

Mr. Rayfield reported that staff had identified roadway, stormwater detention, and residential units currently sited within the Primary and Secondary Conservation Areas, and recommended that these elements be avoided or relocated. Staff further recommended that stormwater detention be shifted to the Secondary Conservation Area and designed using naturalized best management practices consistent with the amendment's recommendation for naturalized stormwater detention.

Mr. Rayfield reported predevelopment groundwater recharge of 84.1 acre-feet and post-development recharge of 91.2 acre-feet, and that the proposal provides 57.1 percent onsite open space, exceeding the amendment's 50 percent requirement. He concluded that the proposal is broadly consistent with the BDAA's land use recommendation and site design standards, and recommended that the applicant complete the Revised 2026 Amendment Edition of the applicant checklist and submittal requirements. Staff offered no recommendation of approval or disapproval, as the application was submitted for conceptual review only.

Michael Huber, Esq., of Dinsmore & Shohl, appeared on behalf of the applicant, Forestar, accompanied by Richard Lester of CESO and Mark Connor of Forestar. Mr. Huber explained that Forestar is a land developer that prepares lots for home builders rather than constructing homes itself and stated that the applicant is not requesting any density bonus beyond the land use recommendation in the 2006 Amendment. He described the site's PUD development text and associated environmental standards, the applicant's efforts to distance development from the Hellbranch Run and core watershed area, and the proposed phasing plan. Mr. Huber stated that the applicant has met with staff regarding stormwater monitoring, mitigation, and other requirements under the new amendment and is committed to working with staff to protect the environmentally sensitive areas of the site.

Mr. Reeves, noting an early departure, asked about the emergency access shown on the west side of the site and requested additional information on that access before any future vote. He also asked the applicant to conduct a preliminary review of Federal Aviation Administration vertical clearance requirements applicable near Bolton Field, given the site's proximity to the airport. Mr. Huber responded that the applicant is working with the fire department on emergency access and will look into the FAA clearance question.

Mr. Denton asked about the location of primary road access; staff and Mr. Huber confirmed that access would run through the AR district to Johnson Road. Mr. Denton, noting his familiarity with the area, stated that Johnson Road is currently less than 22 feet wide and would not support the proposed development without improvement. Mr. Huber responded that a traffic impact study is underway with the appropriate traffic authority and that the developer understands roadway improvements will be needed to support the added traffic.

Mr. Sasson asked whether stormwater generated on the portion of the site outside the Big Darby watershed, to the east, is or could be directed away from the Hellbranch Run watershed and requested that the watershed divide and stormwater routing be explicitly explained at the next meeting. Mr. Lester, representing CESO, stated he was not prepared to answer from the topographic map but would look into it, and Mr. Huber committed to following up with the Panel.

Mr. Sasson further raised questions regarding sidewalk and trail setbacks from streams under the 208 Plan; the wetland categories applicable to the site's wetlands; the use of a prairie or short-grass seed mix rather than reforestation in an area he believes was historically wooded, and a request that only native, non-endangered plant species be used; the level of detail and duration required for water-quality monitoring under the amendment; and a request that all streams and tributaries, including unnamed ditches, be labeled on future site plans. Mr. Rayfield stated that the wetlands have not yet been formally categorized by the Army Corps of Engineers, but that one is likely Category 2 based on the buffers shown and noted that the amendment includes a 150-foot riparian planting requirement along the Stream Corridor Protection Zone and larger stream buffers than previously required. Mr. Huber stated that wetland categories and additional monitoring detail would be provided at the next meeting.

Mr. Denton noted that portions of the Primary Conservation Area appear to be encroached upon by roadway and residential construction and asked that this be addressed. He also identified an inaccurate reference in the applicant checklist to "Grove City Schools," noting that the correct district is the Southwestern School District; Mr. Huber acknowledged the correction. Mr. Denton further reported that a 2025 survey by an ODNR contractor found no live mussel species in Hellbranch Run, and that historical topographic maps suggest the stream has been altered over time, potentially through channelization, leveeing, or loss of riparian forest.

Ms. Brinkerhoff asked that the site not be characterized as "vacant" in staff materials, noting that it is actively farmed agricultural land. She raised concerns regarding long-term funding and maintenance of open space and conservation areas, citing prior experience with underfunded homeowners' associations, and suggested that conservation areas be dedicated to an entity such as the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District. She also asked that the use of anticipated tax increment financing revenue for conservation and stream restoration purposes be clarified and designated. Mr. Huber responded that no agreements regarding public funding have yet been

reached with the City or other authorities, but that any such funds are understood to be restricted to Big Darby and regional improvement purposes benefiting more than the subject development.

Representing Pleasant Township, Mr. Denton stated that the Township continues to seek broader jurisdictional participation and voting representation on the Big Darby Accord review team, and that, absent progress on that issue, the amendment may be difficult for the Township to support. Ms. Brinkerhoff and Mr. Sasson expressed support for expanding technical and jurisdictional participation in the process and agreed to raise the concern with their respective jurisdictions.

In response to a question from Mr. Almeida, Mr. Rayfield clarified that the open space percentage presented reflects the full PUD-6 area, including the portion outside the Big Darby Watershed, and that the open space percentage within the in-watershed subareas alone would likely exceed 57 percent. Staff and the applicant agreed to confirm that calculation at the next meeting.

Chairman Hoyer opened the floor for public comment. Tom Haines, 5051 Johnson Road, a neighboring property owner, stated that his property lies within the Accord boundary and echoed concerns regarding the width and condition of Johnson Road, describing it as a narrow roadway that poses a hazard, particularly for school buses, and that would require improvement to safely accommodate construction traffic and future residents. Mr. Haines stated that a drainage ditch along Johnson Road has not been kept clear despite requests to the property owner and the City, contributing to recurring flooding on neighboring properties, and expressed concern that the proposed development would increase stormwater flowing east absent corrective measures. Mr. Haines also asked whether the open space calculations presented included the AR-1 subarea; Mr. Rayfield confirmed they did not, as AR-1 lies outside the Big Darby Watershed and outside the Panel's review, and would instead be considered through the Greater Westland area commission process. Mr. Denton requested that the pending traffic impact study include the Johnson Road/Big Run Road intersection.

Staff and the applicant confirmed that the additional information requested by the Panel — including emergency access details, FAA clearance review, stormwater routing east of the watershed divide, wetland categorization, and water-quality monitoring detail — would be addressed at a future meeting. There being no further business, Chairman Hoyer announced that the Panel would adjourn to reconvene on September 8, 2026. The meeting concluded at 2:26 p.m.

The minutes of the August 18, 2026, meeting of the Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel were approved this _____ day of _____, 2026.

Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel Chair / Vice Chair