

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**April 30, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Pursuant to due call and notice, the Thief River Falls Planning Commission met in a special session in the Thief River Falls City Council Chambers on Tuesday, April 30, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. Board Members present: Averill, Lee, Lindberg, Shaffer, Sjoberg. Absent: Narverud, Nelson, Reiersen.

Others present: Sparby, Baker. Guests present: Mark Borseth, Skip Duchesneau, Andrew Duchesneau, April Sheinoha, Scot Waldal, Dan Trontvet, Duane & Suzanne Browning, Rhonda & Barry Martinsen, Kelly Kenner, John Holthusen, Mitch Engelstad, Kristen Haase, Cheryl & Larry Lee, Derek & Stacy Lee, Stephanie Neisen, Sam Kenner, Sue Dupree, Harold Dupree, Brian & Mary Espeseth, Ken & Christine Barnes, Lisa Robson, Mike Lorenson

**APPROVE AGENDA:**

Sjoberg called the April 30, 2025, Planning Commission meeting to order. Lee approved the agenda; Averill seconded the motion.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2025, MEETING:**

Lindberg made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes from April 8, 2025.

Lee seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

**COUNCIL ACTIONS:**

The council approved the city code amendment on maximum communication tower height. Height was amended from 200 feet to 365 feet.

The conditional use permit from Wikstrom Telephone Company was approved which allows a 365-foot tower.

**PUBLIC HEARING – COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT AND EDGE HOUSING LLC REZONING REQUEST: :**

Sjoberg opened the public hearing for both the comprehensive plan amendment and the rezoning request from Edge Housing LLC. Baker presented information on the comprehensive plan amendment. The comprehensive plan amendment is to change the property located at 1926 Sanford Parkway from medium-high density residential to high density residential in the comprehensive plan. When doing a rezoning amendment, the rezoning must conform to the comprehensive plan.

Baker then presented the information on the rezoning request. The request is to rezone property located at 1926 Sanford Parkway from Agricultural (AG) to Multi-Family Residential (R-4) to accommodate a three story, 65-unit apartment building.

The city received several letters, and Baker listed the names of those who sent in letters. Sparby added that each letter will be included in the official record and a copy of each letter has been sent to all members of the city council.

The development team of Mike Hron, Skip & Andrew Duchesneau presented a slideshow for The Edge apartment complex project. The presentation included a detailed site plan with pictures & market affected values data. The data showed that property values adjacent to Rivers Bend Apartments which opened in 2018 in Thief River Falls (located at 100 & 102 Barnick Road) increased even when a multi-family residential project was built adjacent to their homes.

Mike Hron stated this is unique opportunity for our community. This project has the right partners, with the right resources at the right time. Hron stated they know change can be difficult. Without change, we don't grow and without growth, we risk regression.

Skip Duchesneau also addressed specific concerns from residents such as location, property values, noise, traffic.

Comments were heard from Lisa Robson, Kelly Kenner on behalf of Rhonda & Barry Martinsen, Mitch Engelstad, Kristen Haase, Brian Espeseth.

Many concerns were raised by nearby neighbors including the chosen location, quality of life, noise, safety, increased traffic, the criteria to meet when rezoning, decreased property value, disruption to the established neighborhood and the proposed plat Sanford & the city provided when building that showed this specific piece of property would be single family residential, not high-density residential.

Mark Borseth with Digi-Key spoke on the need for housing. When Digi-Key expanded in Thief River Falls, they took a huge risk with having enough people to operate. Digi-Key knows that to maintain a great place to live you need housing, daycare facilities, a good school district and Digi-Key has shown great interest in investing in these things to better the community.

After the public comments, Sjoberg closed the public hearing, and the Planning Commission had discussion. Infrastructure is a critical consideration. It would take approximately two million dollars to move the project to the south side of Sanford as there is no infrastructure in place. Baker stated that when Sanford was built, the property was going to be platted for single family homes but the neighborhood didn't want it platted and therefore it wasn't.

Suzanne Browning spoke and wanted to correct that statement. She is familiar with the 2011 proposed plat and it was not stopped because of the neighbors. A petition was submitted to the Environmental Quality Board for an environmental review of the project. The Environmental Quality Board sent a letter to the City of Thief River Falls stating that they had received a petition asking for an EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet) to be prepared for the property. The EAW stated that to plat the property, it will need an Environmental Impact Study and that is why it wasn't platted at that time.

After discussion, Lee made a motion to approve the comprehensive plan amendment. Lindberg seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and voting in favor of the comprehensive plan amendment were Lee, Lindberg, Averill, Sjoberg. Voting against the comprehensive plan amendment was Shaffer. The motion passed with a 4-1 vote. The recommendation will go to the May 6<sup>th</sup> city council meeting.

Lee made a motion to approve the rezoning. Lindberg seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and voting in favor of the rezoning were Lee, Lindberg, Averill, Sjoberg. Voting against the rezoning was Shaffer. The motion passed with a 4-1 vote. The recommendation will go to the May 6<sup>th</sup> city council meeting.

City Attorney Delray Sparby stated that because there was nothing in the motion stating that the rezoning met the criteria that are required for the zoning amendments by ordinance, he suggested re-voting. Lee made a motion to approve the rezoning as it met all criteria that was presented. Lindberg seconded the motion. The roll call vote was unchanged, and the motion passed 4-1.

## **OTHER**

Baker stated that Mayor Mike Lorenson will be appointing a new member to the Planning Commission at the Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> city council meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

Shaffer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m. Lee seconded the motion which carried.