

PLANNING COMMISSION
April 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to due call and notice, the Thief River Falls Planning Commission met in the Thief River Falls City Council Chambers on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. Board Members present: Averill, Lee, Lindberg, Narverud, Nelson, Reiersen, Shaffer, Sjoberg.

Others present: Sparby, Baker. Guests present who signed in: April Scheinoha, Mark Borseth, Darby & Jean Barron, Derek & Stacy Lee, Tyler Ust

APPROVE AGENDA:

Sjoberg called the April 8, 2025, Planning Commission meeting to order. Lee approved the agenda; Nelson seconded the motion.

APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 11, 2025, MEETING:

Reiersen made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes from March 11, 2025. Lindberg seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

COUNCIL ACTIONS:

The Wikstrom Telephone Company tower conditional use permit (200 feet) was tabled. The Planning Commission recommended the city council amend the ordinance to allow a tower as high as 365 feet in March. No motion was given at that time.

At the subsequent city council meeting, a council member who was not present at the first meeting asked for the topic to be brought back as an action item. The conditional use permit was tabled because the council needs to address the ordinance amendment first.

PUBLIC HEARING – STEVEN WESTERMAN VARIANCE REQUEST:

Baker presented information on Steven Westerman's, 904 Alice Drive, request for a variance. Westerman has applied for a variance to place two solar panel arrays in his side yard. The current city ordinance only allows ground mounted solar energy panels in the rear yard. Westerman has a very limited rear yard. Two comments were received, the first is from Alice Wassink, 906 Alice Drive, who is ok with the solar panels but is concerned about what happens if a panel breaks. The second was a phone call from Jana Martin, she is opposed as she has been told that solar panels emit a humming noise, and she occasionally works nights. She also stated she is concerned about the ground panels leeching into the soil.

Westerman stated that solar panels themselves do not emit noise, that it is the inverters that make noise. Westerman's inverter will be inside his storage shed. He also stated that solar panels are non-hazardous.

Narverud asked if this would affect the utility easement. Westerman will stay out of the easement.

Reiersen made a motion to approve to variance, Lee seconded. Lindberg opposed. This recommendation will go to the City Council on Tuesday, April 15th at 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING – EDGE HOUSING LLC REZONING REQUEST:

Sjoberg opened the public hearing for the rezoning request from Edge Housing LLC.

City Attorney Delray Sparby stated that after speaking with Baker, the recommendation is that the public hearing be continued to the next Planning Commission meeting or for a special meeting date that the commission could adjourn to.

This will allow time to provide a published notice for the comprehensive plan amendment which wasn't done. When doing a rezoning amendment, the rezoning must conform to the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan currently shows the property as open space which defaults to agricultural. If we do

a continuance of the rezoning, then both the rezoning and comprehensive plan amendment could be done in conjunction with another.

Discussion was had whether to allow the public in attendance to speak. Sparby stated that since the Planning Commission is not doing the official hearing, any comments at this meeting would not be part of an official hearing record. It is unfortunate that members of the public came tonight and may have to come back, but from a legal standpoint, that would be the proper method.

Members of the audience asked a few questions, but the comments were inaudible due to the distance away from the recorder.

Lindberg made a motion to continue the rezoning hearing to a special meeting date of Wednesday, April 30th at 5:00 p.m. in the council chambers. Lee seconded the motion. Shaffer opposed. The comprehensive plan amendment public hearing will also take place at the April 30th meeting.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT:

The comprehensive plan amendment was tabled until the special Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday, April 30th.

The public hearing is for amending the comprehensive plan for the property located at 1926 Sanford Parkway from Agricultural (AG) to Multi-Family Residential (R-4).

Reierson made a motion to continue the comprehensive plan amendment until the special meeting on Wednesday, April 30th at 5:00 p.m. in the council chambers. Lee seconded the motion which carried.

OTHER:

Baker stated that Nexus Church needs to install handicap ramps soon and will need a variance.

Sjoberg suggested the city look into having a permit or registration for anyone who wants to install a crypto currency machine/ATM in the city. This way there would be information on who owns the machine.

Lindberg stated that he did not vote on the solar panel variance because he thought the commission would be presented with research from other communities and have an opportunity to have a discussion. Lindberg would also like all information to be presented & reviewed during initial discussions if possible. In regard to the Sanford Parkway project, he stated there could be improvements made on the site plan such as buffers and access points which may allow neighbors to buy into this more.

ADJOURNMENT:

Lee made a motion to adjourn the meeting until April 30th at 5:00 p.m. The adjournment was made at 6:01 P.M. Nelson seconded the motion which carried.