

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

April 2nd, 2026

Completed by: Sue Bertrand, P&Z Staff

Site visit for USS Eagle Bend Solar completed by Adam Ossefoort and Jim Pratt on 2/26/2026.

Site visit completed by Adam Ossefoort and Ken Hovet on 3/24/2026 on the Tower Site.

Meeting attended by board members: Chairman Jim Pratt, Vice Chair Ken Hovet, Lloyd Graves, Roger Hendrickson, Andy Watland, and Commissioner Tim Denny.

Staff members: Adam Ossefoort and Sue Bertrand

Other members of the public: Sign-in Sheet is available for viewing upon request.

Jim called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited as a collective group.

Introduction of the staff and board members by Jim.

Ken motioned to have the March 5th, 2026, meeting minutes approved. Roger seconded, voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

Andy motioned to have the agenda approved as presented. Lloyd seconded, voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

AGENDA ITEM 1: USS Eagle Bend Solar LLC: Section 02, Wykeham Township, Site Address: 14910 380th Street, Eagle Bend, MN 56336 PID: 28-0001100

1. Request CUP to construct and operate an up-to 10-megawatt solar farm in AF-1 Zoning District

Tena Monson, US Solar, Mpls. and Brad Wilkening, Westwood Professional Services, St. Cloud office, were present as the applicants.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the new information that was added to the staff report. This report is available for viewing upon request in the Planning & Zoning Office.

Proposed Conditions if approved:

1. Submittal of an interconnection agreement with the electric service provider prior to issuance of land use permits.
2. Development and submittal of a decommissioning plan in compliance with Section 9.20 of the Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance.
3. Establishment of a bond, letter of credit, or escrow account in the amount of \$1,250,000 in which Todd County is made party to for the purposes of decommissioning.
4. Development and approval of a Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP) prior to land use permitting.
5. Establishment of 3 rows of trees to serve as vegetative screening. Screening shall be established on the east and south sides of the project areas. Trees shall be planted in an offset pattern to provide maximum screening.

6. Establishment of a road maintenance agreement with Wykeham Township and submittal of the agreement to Todd County prior to issuance of land use permits. Township agreement shall also include a setback distance of the vegetative screening from the road right of way approved by Wykeham Township.
7. There shall be no loading or unloading of equipment or materials within the road right of way. Roadways shall be kept clear, at all times, during and after construction.
8. Noxious weeds and invasive species shall be controlled, at all times.
9. Vegetative screening shall be no less than 10' in height at the time of establishment. Trees selected for vegetative screening shall be approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District.
10. Vegetative screening along the road right of way shall be setback a distance of no less than 30' measured from the edge of the right of way to the trunk of the planted tree.
11. Applicant must abide by all other applicable federal, state, and local standards.

Adam also pointed out Tena had submitted a 40-page amendment packet for the board members to review and stressed they must take time to review that packet as provided by either taking a recess tonight to read or take home and review at another meeting.

Tena stated she wanted to formally provide some new information tonight through a presentation slide. They will be able to full-depth reclaim the inground posts as part of the decommissioning process. She also stated they will be 66' from the fenceline with their trees. She went through the decommissioning presentation. She stated the most important piece of new information is in the table that shows how they calculate the cost of the decommissioning project and the salvage value. This new information may be viewed in full upon request at the Planning and Zoning office.

Tena mentioned there may be moments in time when the board may want to revisit the permit to review the costs, as they have not added the inflationary value in their figures.

Brad explained storm water management from the presentation. He is also a township official from Becker Township, Chairman of the Planning Commission and they also have a joint planning board that is joint with the city. He stated Solar panels over grass produce 40% less runoff than row crops. Will decrease the need for irrigation, because it is so sandy in Becker township and gives the soil time to restore its' characteristics by not being farmed.

Tena stated when it comes to screening, they want to make sure it is viable and they have the intent of having a screen. She is asking for a little flexibility, as sometimes they cannot find 10' tall trees all at one time.

Tena brought up the Poplar issues. They were planted for a "future use" value. The value of the Solar starts on day one, and she also stated our Comprehensive Plan was very dated, in our assumptions about solar. She did point out the project will be about \$20,000 production tax a year for the County which is 20% of Todd County's Economic Development budget.

Jim gave a short process review for public comment.

Public Comment:

Gene read out of the Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance, Section 9.20, and reminded the board of the approved variance by the Board of Adjustment by a 3 to 1 vote, and the proceedings have been recorded to the property. She stated the design of this process has served its' purpose. This project will provide significant additional tax revenue for Todd County along with energy for thousands of homes and businesses, and the 26,000 county residences who call Todd County their home, far more benefit than her land is currently providing, yet protecting wetlands and lowlands from run-off and destruction. Every year she sees more and more building sites and woodlands removed, and low areas tiled and drained to raise farm crops. She stated we produce more here in the US than we can consume in a year, and when our markets to foreign countries become limited, the prices for corn, beans and other grains all suffer. When our government agencies say "We have to continue farming our land", it only forces the farmers to leverage our farms to satisfy what the government agencies and others see as valuable. It's at that point she began to realize we no longer control our own situations and no longer control what we own. Is she supposed to feel good about that? She wants to thank the Todd County Board of Adjustment, Planning and Zoning and the Wykeham Township Supervisors for the support they have provided for this project.

Conrad Stoterau from Eagle Bend owns land to the NW about a mile and he farms. Wants to make it clear it is not Prime Farmland. It is wet, and the amount of money it will take to bring that up to make it good prime farmland is just about impossible. He looks at this project and sees she could go down to the FSA office, put it in CRP and nobody would say a thing. She is putting in the same grasses and pollinators as you would do in CRP. What she is doing is adding value to her property. What the value does to her property helps the tax base. \$15,000 to Todd County and over \$4,800 to Wykeham Township. He stated his township has a budget of \$175,000 and \$4,500 is a lot of money to come in. You've got the County, the Townships and the school districts raising their budgets every year, and with Todd County it is 4-5% every year. The tax money has got to come from someplace. If we can get tax revenue off this property, from somewhere else besides my pocketbook, or the boards' pocketbook, he stated he thinks they should bite on this, because it is not going to get any less. If your property value drops then your taxes will too, because each one of these entities are taking so much money out of there. If we can share the burden with an outside source, rather than us paying the extra property taxes, he is all for it. This is a project like CRP and she is putting added value on it. She owns the land and has the right to do whatever she wants.

Dave Harren, owns land next to Jean's, and stated it is Prime farmland because you look at the soils and all you have to do is tile it out, but whatever, that's not the deal here. He stated he has a brother that runs utilities for Wilmer and he is head of the energy commission. All of our tax dollars are subsidized to places like these, pointing to applicants. Everybody is wondering why your electric bills go higher, it's because of these things. If they were so good, they could run on themselves, and they would contribute, but our tax dollars off our electric bill all goes to this stuff. Either wind, solar or whatever. It can't sustain itself. Like his brother told him, we have two systems in place. We have solar and wind and we are still subsidizing, because we still need our infrastructure for our electricity and that is why our electricity bill is still going up, because of these things. We keep putting these things up, and it's all over and he's not picking on Jean, it is all over the country. California cannot even sustain itself and they have solar panels all over. We keep paying and paying and paying. The only ones getting rich off this is the Solar Companies. It is all tax dollars that they are getting funded on. Guaranteed. We are paying the bill here, guys, unfortunately that's the way it works. They are not doing it themselves; they are getting it through tax dollars. And our taxes are going to keep going up. It is not going to be funded by this, pointing to US Solar. It is all Prime farmland, and you can talk about the run-off,

but if you had it all seeded in corn, it will still not absorb what corn does. Talk to the agronomists. Corn takes over ½" to ¾" per day when it is growing and everybody knows that. Grass doesn't take that. Not only that, but it will also be shaded off, so it will all go over to one spot. We went through this. We have ordinances for a reason. Dave stated if you are going to do this here, he is all for it and he will put his farm into it too, if they want to come and put them up, but the community is going to suffer, big time. That's what happens. You take the farmland out of there, the amount of money that goes into the local communities from farm ground and from agricultural ground is way more than what that solar thing is going to set off. He addressed the board and stated you guys know that.

Wayne Wendel, read from the Section 9.20 from the Ordinance, Solar is not to go on Prime farmland, according to United States Department of Agriculture. He referenced Rockwood soils 2-6% slopes, all areas are Prime farmland. If you approve of this, you are opening Pandora's box. This is something that is subsidized by the US government. He had the opportunity to talk to some people who worked for a city energy department by a medium sized city, and they were required to put in these kinds of projects and didn't care if they produced or not. They just had to do it to satisfy the State of MN for the Green Energy rules. They won't be producing anything today if you look outside, and with all the other factors (tornados, snowy, cloudy), it's not going to be producing.

Board discussion:

Ken asked to see the cost graph, and Tena handed the board paper copies, and entered into the record.

Jim wanted to address the Prime farmland because people keep bringing it up, the last meeting and this meeting. That isn't something we just come up with here, that is decided by the Department of Agriculture. So, if you agree if it is Prime farmland or not, it really doesn't matter because it is set by the Department of Ag who designates what is Prime farmland and what's not. It is nothing like the Red River Valley in Southern Minnesota, but it is Prime farmland in Todd County.

Tim stated during the presentation, there were a few things mentioned about our Comp Plan, and our Economic Development Guiding Principal #4 states to promote, protect and support existing business and agriculture. He stated agriculture in Todd County is our bread and butter. We want to talk about jobs and what not? Last month you talked about two technicians who are on this project that come back and monitor these panels, and he doesn't see those as being local hometown boys or girls. He doesn't see that. We don't have the capacity to have local contractors to install something of this magnitude, he doesn't see that. A lot of these projects, he sees, get farmed out, and it would be great if it didn't, but, in your presentation you talk about people coming back for better jobs, and right now, we have a young group of people, in our area, especially in that area, that are trying to come back to farm on mom and dad's farm, or their grandpa's farm. They want the community; they want to live here. They are buying and building houses here. There're generations who are coming into farming and that's what makes it so special in Todd County and our farm ground. We talk about the economic impact of this project, \$20,000.00 to Todd County just doesn't resonate with him because a poor farmer is going to invest probably \$350.00 an acre. Seed, fertilizer, chemical and rent. The average in this area is close to \$500.00 - \$550.00. He invited to correct him if he is wrong, but it takes a lot of dollars in this area to do that if you were to plant corn. That being said, those dollars, on this site specifically, those dollars are being spent at the Co-op a few miles away for fertilizer or seed or the elevator

that stores and hauls the grain. We have local trucks that are going to haul that grain into town. We have fuel that is local. Tire shops, hydraulic repair shops, maintenance free equipment. The impact of this farm, of that ground is hard to compute everything, because everything is in a minute small community. If a hydraulic hose breaks on that farm, you are going as close as possible and keep it local, you are not going an hour away to get it fixed. If an engine breaks down, you are going to stay in the County, guaranteed, that is, because there are good repair shops in town. We are not farming that out. It's tough when you put that \$20,000 against what the farm can produce. This was a good information packet, he found a few things, it now says 58 acres, and he thought it was 56 acres. This says 35-years decommissioning and he thought it was 25-years.

Tena explained the fence line is 51, but if you square it off that's where you get to 56. She asked where he saw 58. Then added Westwood may have used their own figures and she apologized for that.

Tim continued, also the Land Use Guiding Principals "to promote and guide orderly development and growth in Todd County in a fair and common-sense manner" and stated he doesn't believe this is the best common-sense manner of growth for Todd County. He stated he feels they should explore other avenues before we start heading down this road. He stated this is a big packet and a lot to dig through and he has only glanced at it.

Roger stated we set this in the Ordinance about Prime farmland and there are other people who think they have more authority over this, and he knows at least two of them are farmers and he can't come up with where they are coming from, unless they have enough farmland they don't care. One question, the steel you stated you would cut off and leave part in the ground and now here, he thinks he is reading it right, it is pulled out.

Tena, that's correct, they are able to full depth reclaim. She apologized for last time she was incorrect on the steel piling removal.

Andy confirmed the entire 12' pole will be removed during decommissioning. State of MN requires a detailed decommissioning plan and update every 5 years, and he is wondering what that looks like, will we get to be a part of that and will that include updates to the cost estimates. The numbers look very peachy right now, but his concern is the costs may change for recycling with inflation. He did an AI check and found our 1.25 million in escrow to cover decommissioning will be 2.8 to 3 million 25 years from now. Will that be looked at as we go and adjusted if we discover we are exceeding our 1.25 million?

Jim, we could add that as a condition.

Adam, will we be able to ask for additional financial security after five years? He could ask an attorney.

Andy, either do that or ask for higher insurance now.

Adam stated that would exceed what the standard of the Ordinance is now.

Andy, fixed numbers in an ordinance are a challenge, valid at the time, but would change over time.

Tena stated she would be fine to come up with a separate agreement on checking in on the decommissioning cost changes and is open to working with the county on that.

Andy, if things stay the way they are today it would be fine, but we would hate to be stuck in a bad spot. He also wanted to point out that he knows it is in the Comprehensive plan to promote alternative energy, but it is also in the Comprehensive plan to promote agriculture. Those are conflicting with this project. We do have the responsibility as a County to promote a “consistent use” of these rules and the fact a variance is needed for this project makes it difficult to be consistent for the next project. If we are going to be consistent, we might set a precedence that could be negative for what the true intent of the Comprehensive plan is. He added, he would like to put this in perspective; the variance was granted for the Prime farmland part of it, and technically it is not a part of our decision making process, but his concerns are: Prime farmland doesn’t have any impact on how it is used, or being used, or the farm practices of who is farming it, whether they are attaining yields or not, it is a designation of that soil type. You could say it is rocky, not drained, great or bad, but by the definition in the Ordinance: it is Prime. That’s the end of it, really. It was Brought up in front of us as a reason for the variance is: the yields were not being met #1- that is a farming practice and #2 - there is no documentation of proof of what those yields were attained on this farmland, as far as corn use. The comparison was made about a certain level of corn yield (no documentation) and compared to the County average of 210 bushels per acre and was **erroneous** information. So, the comparison brought forth to us as well as the Board of Adjustment is **incorrect**. If you look at the USDA yields for Todd County, the average for corn is **not** 210 bushels per acre, it is 152. So, if you are comparing the current yields that is being attained to the County average as an argument that it shouldn’t be considered Prime farmland, and thus get the variance, and thus skew our opinion on whether we should grant the permit, those numbers are incorrect. Therefore, it brings the question into his mind; if those numbers are incorrect, what else is being exaggerated or minimized or hidden from us in the aspect of full disclosure in order to skew our decision making? He did state many of his concerns have been addressed.

Jim stated we were given an addendum to review before we can make a decision.

Ken moved to table for review of the 40-page addendum, Roger seconded.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

| Board member | Vote (yes or no) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ken Hovet | Yes |
| Roger Hendrickson | Yes |
| Lloyd Graves | Yes |
| Andy Watland | Yes |
| Jim Pratt | Yes |

Motion carried to table until May 7th, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 2: The Towers LLC C/O Buell Consulting -Section 23, Birchdale Township, Site Address: 21794 State Hwy 28, Grey Eagle, MN 56336 PID: 03-0018603

1. Request for construction of a monopole for telecommunications antennas and equipment with a structure height of 155', and an overall height of 164' including the lighting rod in Rural Townsite Zoning District.

Justin was present as the applicants.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. This report is available for viewing upon request in the Planning & Zoning Office.

Recommendation:

A motion to recommend approval to the County Board of Commissioners with the following conditions:

Proposed Conditions:

1. Applicant must abide by all applicable federal, state, and local standards.

On Site Visit Report was reviewed by Ken: This report may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning Office.

Correspondence received: None

Public comment: None.

Board discussion:

On Site Visit Report was reviewed by Ken: This report may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning Office.

Roger 180'?

Adam 164' and it does meet or exceeds all setbacks for the parcel, equal to the tower height.

Ken, it will be in the guy's yard. Can we confirm it is a free-standing tower?

Justin, yes, no guide wires, mono pole design.

Ken cellphone use?

Justin, yes.

Andy, how deep is the foundations on free standing?

Justin, he can get that measurement for the board.

Andy asked to see the area where this is located.

Adam stated they have enclosed documents stating they have been approved by FFA and in an area where they do not require the review, as they are far enough away from any airports. This is the Ward springs and little Birch Lake area is South and East of it.

Adam went through the specs on the overhead showing more detailed plans for the project and area.

Justin there is a vicinity map that shows the area and they are all engineered for structural accuracy.

Andy stated he farms around one of the mono poles and they are unobtrusive.

Roger mentioned the soil and Justin stated it will be built for structural adequacy.

Ken, not unusual to see spray planes out there, what sort of visual will they have of the tower?

Justin stated Verizon abides by all FAA and FTC regulations and it is not required to be lit, anything under 199 ft., unless it is within 3.14 miles of an airport.

Ken, really nothing to make that tower visible to the pilots.

Justin stated the Pilots have their systems to be notified of anything that would be of hazard if it were an issue. That's what they would be complying with.

Justin, sheet A-1 shows the side view, and it does have space for four additional carriers.

Discussion on tower placement on the site, in reference to the surrounding structures.

Roger motioned to recommend approval with the one condition as presented, Ken seconded.

1. Applicant must abide by all applicable federal, state, and local standards.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

| Board member | Vote (yes or no) |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Ken Hovet | Yes |
| Roger Hendrickson | Yes |
| Lloyd Graves | Yes |
| Andy Watland | Yes |
| Jim Pratt | Yes |

Motion carried. Ken noted the application will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on April 21st, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Amendment to Article XII. Regulation on Cannabis Businesses, Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance.

Staff Findings: Adam reviewed the proposed amendments and pointed out the difference in how to measure for setbacks and the packet that was mailed to the board members did not have the wording to specify where the setback is measured from; be it from the Cannabis business to a property line containing a school etc. and not to the school structure itself. The staff report may be viewed in full, upon request at the Planning and Zoning office.

Correspondence received: none

Board discussion:

Adam stated it does not have how we are going to measure setbacks, yet.

Andy, business means any of those components or buildings used to run the business.

Adam, we are measuring from the closest point of the business (read from the definition of a structure from our ordinance) to the property line that contains the school, daycare etc.

Jim, write that "setbacks shall be measured"...

Discussion on how to measure and from what for the setback and how to word it.

Adam stated he will correct the numbering from what they have.

Public comment:

Barb Becker asked, from the measuring point, is the well or septic system considered a part of the structure (related to the cannabis operation)?

Ken would say no, that would be more of a utility, and the board agreed.

Jim suggested amending the wording.

Adam, for the purpose of this section, a fence surrounding a cannabis field is considered a structure. He stated he sent this on to Jason for review but had not heard back. If a big red flag comes up, it may be remanded back from the commissioners, but if you are ready to move on this, it would go to the commissioners on the 21st of April and if they are ready to adopt, from that moment it would be enforceable. The rest is logistical.

Tim commented on the first few applications for Cannabis really helped us zone in on how to structure this a lot more accordingly for what our needs are.

Jim thinks it should go to the commissioners before we meet with a surprise.

Ken motioned to recommend approval for adoption, Andy seconded.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

| Board member | Vote (yes or no) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ken Hovet | Yes |
| Roger Hendrickson | Yes |
| Lloyd Graves | Yes |
| Andy Watland | Yes |
| Jim Pratt | Yes |

Motion carried. Jim noted the proposed amendments will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on April 21st, 2026.

Ken asked for a revised copy to be mailed and e-mailed to the Board.

Adam, yes.

Moratorium discussion. Adam would get legal counsel on that, if it comes to that.

Andy, we are trying to get this done before another application comes up.

Roger motioned to adjourn, Lloyd seconded. Voice vote, no dissent heard, meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.