

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2025

Completed by: Sue Bertrand, P&Z Staff

Site visits completed by Adam Ossefoort and Jim Pratt on 8/28/2025

Meeting attended by board members: Chair 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 August 7th, 2025 meeting minutes approved. Andy seconded the motion. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

Roger motioned to have the agenda approved as printed. Lloyd seconded the motion. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

AGENDA ITEM 1: Brown Bear North Plat, Barry & Debra Brown: Section 33, Turtle Creek Township,
Site Address: 33848 Little Pine Drive, Cushing, MN 56443

PID: 24-006220

1. Request a CUP to create a 2.23 Acre, one lot Plat in Recreational Development Shoreland Zoning District.

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

Proposed Conditions: None

Correspondence received: None

Public comment: None

Board discussion:

Jim stated he was on the site visit It's a chunk of wooded ground. There are some nice pines in there if you could avoid destroying, it would be nice. Other than that, just woods.

Ken is the access road a public road?

Barry, no, a private road.

Adam, it is a publicly dedicated, private road.

Roger moved to approve with no conditions, Ken 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 application will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on September 16th, 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Donniel Robinson: Section 28, Moran Township, **Site Address:** 40324 County Rd. 21, Browerville, MN 56438, **PID:** 19-0029102

1. Request to build a 60'x120' building to grow cannabis indoors as a licensed microbusiness, according to Statute, in AF2 Zoning.

Donniel was present as the applicant and stated her application intentions. Her husband and her have owned the property for about twelve years. Her husband was a contractor in Afghanistan, was physically injured and has some post war issues. They are looking to have a business they can do that A. Have her home with him, B. a business that puts purpose back in his life, and as the cannabis business has come to light, it is something they can do agriculturally with their land. They're expectation is to have an indoor grow with a new building. They have a micro license so it allows them to do up to 5,000 sq. ft. of canopy, roughly a half of 100- foot length of a pole building, and the rest of the building would be for preparation. Basically, all they would have there are plants. As a micro license, they would have the opportunity to do more of the business, but they are not interested in that. They simply want to grow the plant and have a quiet life in the country.

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

Options for tonight:

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

A motion to deny the request by establishing findings to support the denial.

A motion to table the request to allow for additional review time.

Proposed Conditions if approved:

1. Establishment of a commercial grade fence around the perimeter of the cannabis operation.
2. All exterior lighting shall be compliant with MN Rule 9810 but shall not cast light beyond the property boundary.
3. Establishment of vegetative screening on the north, west, and south sides of the cannabis operation on the exterior of the fencing. Vegetative screening shall consist of two rows of conifer trees that are no less than 10' tall at the time of planting. Trees in each row shall be offset from each other to provide maximum screening potential.
4. There shall be no signage of the business allowed at any time.

5. Applicant shall allow for periodic review of the property by County staff.
6. Applicant must abide by all other applicable Federal, State, and local standards.

Correspondence received: Yes, these letters and petition may be viewed in full, upon request at the Planning and Zoning office. Adam read aloud correspondence from:

Paul and Elizabeth Kortie
Peggy Saleen
Helen Motl
Mike and Jonie Johnstone
Bruce Motl
Jacob & Nicole Zellgert
Gail Trout
Petition from Moran Township residents

Board discussion:

Jim asked if any pesticides are being used on the plants.

Donniel stated only as needed and at no greater use than any other agricultural business. Their goal is to be as close to an organic business as possible. This is a product that is consumed so they have to pass food grade as far as molds, mildews and any chemicals used on them the processes used. The traffic issues? At our largest, it would be 300 pounds of plant at a time and that is only a pick-up truck. Not semi's or big vehicles moving in and out of property.

Jim how often do you harvest?

Donniel stated at a minimum three times a year and at a maximum, six times a year. Understands the concerns about this and the fear for this product. Doesn't know how she would feel it were not her requesting this permit. They intent this to be a very quiet, small operation. Nobody even needs to know that it is there and it is better for them if they don't. They would be transporting product off of the property and maybe have 3 to 5 employees, and they would be seasonal.

Jim asked if they have a rough idea of how many plants?

Donneil stated it would depend on what variety of plant they have as there are different sizes. They are allowed to have 5,000 sq. ft. canopy, so that just means the leaf top. Initially starting with a very small grow, and they are going to be learning this product as they do it and would be no where near that large initially (which is considered very small for an agriculture product and even a cannabis grow). She stated she does not use cannabis herself, and this is a business, not something they think is cool and fun and great, but it is a product that can have really positive health effects. They want to be part of the good part of the industry.

Ken asked if the plants are going to be grown hydroponically?

Donniel in soil, in pots, also another method in their product called Rockwell they may experiment with, however, the most sure-fire way to grow this product is the way nature intended and do it in dirt.

Jim asked what size are the pots?

Donniel, 1 to 2-gallon sized pots.

Ken, how much water per day will you be using when in full operation?

Donniel stated they will have a grower working them and she is not the best “technical” on that. Fair to say...

Ken how many pots do you think?

Donniel calculated, the lights are about 4' x 4' with typically 18" per pot, then apologized for not having the answers as she is a little blown away by the feedback and having trouble recalling the information, roughly 1,000 plants at a time. The pot itself will take up a square of 18".

Ken artificial lighting?

Donniel, yes, and LED lights. There is a high-pressure sodium light which has a lot higher demand on the electrical grid, and while the LED will generally have a lower pull off the grid.

Ken, which kind will you have?

Donniel, LED.

Ken, discharge water?

Donniel, they are still talking that through, as they are still making determinations, either the water will be processed within the building or ... the run-off water should be fairly clean, they will be adding some nutrients but for the most part there will be no synthetic chemicals.

Ken, so you could almost reuse that?

Donniel, potentially, yes.

Ken insulated and heated building?

Donniel, correct.

Ken, have you staked out where the building is going to be so you know you will be 500 feet away from the neighbors' buildings?

Donniel stated her understanding is 200' from a residence 500' from a daycare.

Adam corrected 500 feet from the residence. So, the property line really isn't a factor in that setback, other than the building location itself, measured from the property line, in agricultural zoning, it is 30', so, the more restrictive setback is the measurement from the building itself.

Ken your main concern is the 500' from the residence.

Donniel stated that was different from what she had heard last. They have enough property there, so they can orient themselves to meet that setback. We know that for sure and feel pretty confident.

Andy stated there was some mention of some onsite consumption as a concern.

Donneil stated that absolutely will not be a part of their business. The business is hers. Her husband is disabled from Afghanistan and will work to a certain extent as he is able, but the license is hers. They bought the property together and the question is why in Todd County? It is because that is where they own the agricultural land. They had planned to live and raise their child up here, but life did not work out that way at the time. We had hoped to use their land for agricultural, and that is what it is zoned for. The micro license is the smallest license you can get, very entry level license. It allows for vertical integration but you are not required to vertically integrate. They have no interest in retail to the public, they just want to grow plants and that is the gist what they want to do in our location. Do not want to process, do not want to make gummies, none of that.

Jim, the CUP application is only for growing.

Donniel, correct, that is all they intend to do.

Adam confirmed, yes, cultivation.

Ken stated he ran a calculation on 18" square with 5,000 feet of canopy, and it comes out to about 2,200 plants. Does that sound right?

Donniel, I trust your math.

Adam demonstrated how far the neighbors are and with a rough estimate and it is possible to meet all setbacks.

Ken, plenty of room.

Donniel, majority of the building will be little baby plants, office space, a bathroom and things required by law. This is a highly regulated industry and would be shut down before any disturbance to neighbors. It will be a ventilated facility, there is humidity controls and it has to be controlled to pass the testing to have it be a legal product.

Andy, does the ventilation system emit and any type of allergens?

Donniel stated not that she is aware of. It is supposed to filter the air as it comes out, part of that is controlling smell and shouldn't be mold spores to emit. They are not doing any of the processing so the plant itself does not give out any smell any more than if it was grown out in a field somewhere.

Andy stated the plants will be removed while they are in a green state?

Donneil, correct. Hand cut, very small business, inverted to dry and two parts, the flower to be sold as a smokable product and there is the stock and the leaves and stated she thought the gummies were made from the less useful parts of the product, while the flower is a smokable product.

Andy asked if the drying process occur inside?

Donneil, inside.

Andy, so there could be dust through the drying?

Donneil, you would be handling the product pretty roughly to be causing dust. This is an industry where the prettier the plant, the more value it has to you. These are not plants that are going to be ground up or anything, and they will be transported gently. She cannot see a scenario where there is dust filled air.

Andy, so the normal handling will not cause dust.

Donniel, correct.

Lloyd, do you have a market for it?

Donniel yes, there are retail entities that are opening now that do not have the product to sell, and they expect the demand to be very high. The size and the quality they are hoping to produce, would be the equivalent to doing like a high-quality beer, so if you like IPA beer it is kind of like the equivalent to that, they would be growing high quality for the cannabis that is coming out of the grow operation. So, yes there is a market for it. At this point, other than native producers that had a head start on the rest of the growers, there is no product in the pipeline yet. That will change and the industry will catch up and the demand will be different, but initially the demand is going to be very high.

Roger, how big of a well?

Donneil, 100' with a 6" inch diameter pipe.

Andy, do you happen to know the water pumping capacity of that?

Donneil, it was put in with the understanding this would be the use of that well.

Roger, what he was looking for was it was not like a big irrigation well where you can pump more than 1,000 gallons a minute.

Donneil, she didn't think so. They are not using water any where near what a corn field would.

Ken, his math shows they will use about 1,000 gallons a day, and that's not a lot. The building, is that like a large rectangular steel sided building? Look like any other machine shed?

Donniel, correct, just an insulated pole shed.

Ken, what kind of security measures?

Donneil, there are basic security requirements that are set up by law and rule. There needs to be cameras on the inside plus cameras and lighting on the outside, enough lighting to catch any that is going on. If things go well, no one will even know they are there. We hope that will mitigate the risk of criminal activity. She stated they are also transporting off site themselves, so they will not even have delivery drivers that have to know where the facility is.

Ken state suggests fence but does not require it.

Donniel stated she would not build a fence with the indoor grow and a secure building, she personally feels a fence would be less visually appealing than just having the security the building would afford. Would rather not as it make it more institutional looking and is certainly not our goal.

Lloyd who would monitor the security cameras?

Donneil, security cameras have remote access and would be available on her phone and authorized others and they are also backed up for ninety days on the cloud-based system and also on a server that is hers. They would go through a call-based system through a service, for affordability.

Andy what is your interpretation Rule 9810 of the 30-minute immediate response, and so you have that figured out?

Donniel, part of the process for these businesses is to have a relationship with the local law enforcement, whether that be the sheriff, local or whatever, and there is a plan with those officials on how that system will be impacted. She stated they have family within 30 minutes for her, and they are within about 60 minutes.

Andy, so the protocol is you or a designated person be on site within 30 minutes?

Donniel, the OCM is doing a great job, but some of this is influx a little bit, and they are still thinking through some of this. She believes it is some manner of response to an alarm and does not mean someone has to be on site within thirty minutes. The likelihood of an alarm going off would be more of a glitch, or an animal or something like that. She doesn't believe they will be an attractive site for any illegal activity. There are much bigger and more lucrative places to bother.

Public comment:

Allen Halbersma, chairperson from Moran Township, Donniel attended their meeting about a month ago and presented this, so they were aware, but their jurisdiction does not allow them to control what happens on agricultural property, realizes they have no say on what she can and can't do. Wondered if there was a generator in case of a power outage? Safety issues with security being 30 minutes away from Sheriffs' department and most businesses are directly connected to the fire department. Wants to stay quiet and low but our society doesn't allow that. They have issues in two sections of their township already with security and when they sniff out this is a cannabis shop or growth area it will be like fox on a cat in that area. Security cannot be disregarded as "we are out in the country" and the Sheriff knows that and this will open a whole new can of worms. He understands this is one of the first cannabis utilities in the County, and as time goes on when there gets to be several, are we equipped to handle the growth? A lot of area to cover. This is wholesale and has no intention of going retail, but in opening comments he was listening close and heard they would allow sampling on the grounds, then when the question was asked heard a different answer. Concerned yes or no of sampling on site? He asked Donniel if her license permit goes with her if she decides to sell or does it stay with the land?

Jim clarified the CUP goes with the land.

Adam added the license goes with the person.

Allen, septic waste regulations, water, aroma issues were brought up and is there special cleanup if it is discontinued as a cannabis facility, is there a special cleanup? He knows with meth, it must be burned. Who is responsible? Allen stated if this is approved tonight, we have to consider where this is going and what it is going to lead to? Felt an Industrial park would offer an ideal setting for all of the township' questions for an operation like this.

Kim Harff, lives next door to this proposed operation and showed a power point. This power point may be viewed in full, upon request at the Planning and Zoning office. She stated the township has done their homework and are Cannabis experts. They have questions that have no answers because it is still not federally legal yet. Two concerns are infra structure and environment. No police protection within 30 minutes and will not take people long to catch on. They had a hemp field in Moran township, and there are undesirables and unwanted traffic in there all of the time and do not want that in the area. Worried about increased criminal activity.

Electricity increases.

Air emissions are a concern, who monitors (local members?) what can be done when the complaints of odor and "it stinks" come in? The hemp field did stink all of the time, for several miles.

MPCA states there is THC in the waste water and it must go into an approved sewer system, must be a holding tank, who monitors? Must be sent to a waste water treatment plant. There may be one in an Industrial area.

Kim received 3 minutes from Gail Trout.

Teresa Zellgert gave her 3 min.

Two more gave their minutes from the public.

Zoning issues –

Concerns for the younger generation long term effect.

Worried about property values. Will it be like the rendering plant? We have no economic value in this.

State Statute states Todd County must have three retail facilities per 12,500 people but it does not say we have to have a “growing facility”, and why should we be the Guinea pigs?

Mission Statement from Todd Wadena Corrections:

“Safer communities everyday through evidence-based practice”. We don’t have the answers, but we do have the questions for the long-term effect from this indoor cannabis growing facility in our rural community. They do know it takes 1 and a half to 2 gallons of water per plant per day.

Nicole Zellgert the applicant has demonstrated a need, when has cannabis been a need for Moran Township? The word need means: a requirement, necessary duty or obligation. Todd County P & Z Ordinance states Section 5.05 Conditional Use Permit, Sub Section C part III, “The applicant in the opinion of the Planning Commission has demonstrated a need for the proposed use and is reasonably related to the overall needs of the County and to the existing land use”. When has cannabis been a need in Todd County? Is this facility a need in Todd County? This facility would be used to grow recreational cannabis, where is the need for recreational cannabis? Not medicinal, recreational. A quick look on the main page of our Todd County Website states: “Todd County faces many challenges with an aging population, a need for improved housing stock, help with addiction, and support for those with mental health issues.” Why would we allow Cannabis when we are already stating we need help with addiction? RIGHT ON THE MAIN PAGE OF TODD WADENA’S WEBSITE, BLACK AND WHITE FOR EVERYBODY TO SEE! IS THIS NOT CONTRADICTION? In line five of the same Ordinance, it states “The use will not create a pollution hazard or the detrimental effects both during and after construction. Effects to be considered may include, but not be limited to soil erosion, sedimentation, pollution or other degradation of surface waters and ground water supplies, impact on water supplies and sewer treatment.” Again, do we have the water supply? Recapped Kim’s report treating water.

Todd County MN 2030 Comprehensive Plan, “Due to the high demand for water and the limited resources available, the County must plan to protect and maintain these water resources.” It also states: “very little is known about the connection of aquifers in Todd County or where the specific recharge areas are located in addition to the extent of these interconnections is not well known.” That should be a huge red flag. We don’t know what our water supply is. She stated we need that figured out. Will the water usage run us dry? Will our health and general welfare be compromised?

Joe Brichacek gave his 3 minutes

Nicole continued, by the time the building is fully erected, what is the demand for cannabis at that time, compared to all of these other buildings that may have already been erected and people are moving in, they are going to be ready for production much faster. Remember, in the purposes stated in Section 1.02 of the Ordinance this says: “Protecting the public health, safety, comfort, convenience and general welfare. Protecting, preserving and developing economically viable agricultural land. Promoting orderly development of the residential commercial Industrial and recreational public areas. Conserving the natural and scenic beauty and attractiveness of the County. Conserving and developing the natural resources of the County. Providing for the compatibility for the different land uses and the most appropriate use of land throughout the County. Minimizing environmental pollution. Nicole, addressed the board, please, she asks each of you to keep this in mind while making your decision, that will affect all of the surrounding properties. Help protect those of us who have our homes here and not just a business.

Paul Kortie, neighboring property across the street, currently they do not live there but come down every other weekend. Stated he works for Government, he sees, he hears a lot of this and they are trying to put these structures in our city and our neighboring properties. Anything that has to be put in the city has to be put in an industrial zone. Currently has a friend that is in the process but was a block and a half away from residential, too close so it was zoned commercial residential, and did not qualify, and from what he is hearing

tonight, you are talking a large building drying operation and didn't hear anything about fire suppression. Just the generation of the off flow, he doesn't think all of the questions have been answered. Yes, he has property in Todd County, Carlton County and he thinks as a County you need to look into it and doesn't think you will find these types of units out in a farm field.

Rick Brichacek has land kiddy corner from this. Don't take anything personal as they do not have anything personal against you (Donniel). Biggest concern is security, a lot of thieves stealing stuff constantly, drove a pot head home accidentally the other night and knows he had ill intentions. When these types of people find out what is in your shed, they are going to be right over there, who is going to stop them? In two minutes, you could take a cordless roto zip thing and could rip in that building and be out and it just brings in that sort of thing. The water issue, thought she may have been a bit ill-prepared, expected her to have notes, facts, how much water and what is your exact plan and he didn't see that. Thought she may need more time to prepare her proposal, business plan, how much stuff are you going to sell, when are you going to sell and a little more structure. They, as a township, need more information to base their decision correctly.

Stacy Brichacek, thankful for where she lives and for neighbors who care so deeply about our safety and the health of her community. Shares all of the same concerns very deeply. What are the next steps? How can they open this ordinance up for revision? Every time a change in policy happens, there should be an audit. You don't know what you don't know until you know. How can we open this up to restricting cannabis sales, cannabis growing, and like Kim pointed out, we are not required to have "growers" within our County? So how can we make it "we don't want growers in our County"? We do not want cannabis in our County because of the issues we have all raised tonight. Meant for a commercial zoned property. Hate to push it on our cities, But it is still Federally illegal. Does not see the harm in enacting extreme regulations or restricting it if we can legally. The state of MN did not legalize this because it is healthy for us, or that our kids are going to thrive off of this, they did it for a tax base increase only. We do not want to be Guinea pigs. If the CUP goes with land what is stopping them from selling to the next person who isn't from here, and will harm us even more?

Kate Skogstad, agrees with the crime thing, it is going to be a day before people are going find out about this. You live 60 minutes away from there, Kate stated she, herself, lives 30 seconds away. It is a little scary. Say you already had the business here, she would have never bought her property. She really believes this will bring the property values down. Even though it is a nice little business, everybody is going to know what is going on there. She requested the board to deny it.

More board discussion:

Adam stated he had an additional condition that he noticed did not save to his staff report, that had restricted the business to just that singular 60' x 120' building proposed, and that any further expansion would require review of the Planning Commission and just wanted to note that, not sure why it didn't save. He added he has reached out to the MPCA (Brainerd) on the waste water requirements from one person, there is one certain person to contact on cannabis regulation so as to not give different answers to same questions and has not received a call back. Also, he has reached out to Jason, our legal team just to clarify a few legal things, and have not heard back from him either.

Ken made a motion to table for more information, Roger seconded.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

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

Motion carried. Jim noted this will be tabled until next month's meeting.

Adam stated this will be on Oct 2, at 6:00 PM, same room, and this will not be re-noticed, as it has been tabled. It will be on next meetings agenda and publicly noticed through the newspaper, but not individually to all of the neighbors. To the applicant, you will be getting a letter from Adam that this has been extended, sometime before the sixty days has expired. We do post the board packed on our website for the next meeting, so you may review that if you would like.

Ken, please bring better info on water usage.

Adam stated the agenda will also be posted in Long Prairie Leader, then they submit it to other local papers.

Jim 7:35 five-minute recess and resumed at 7:42.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Rudy Miller: Section 33, Iona Township, **Site Address:** 19202 270th St., Long Prairie, MN 56347

PID: 13-0032601

1. Request a CUP to operate a small-scale sawmill in AF2 Zoning.

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

Proposed Conditions:

1. Hours of operation shall be restricted to 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM CST, Monday through Saturday.
2. Operation of the sawmill shall be conducted within a permitted structure.
3. Outdoor storage of products shall be allowed but shall be conducted in compliance with Section 9.01B of the Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance.
4. There shall be no loading or unloading of materials within the road right of way.
5. Applicant shall abide by all other applicable federal, state, and local standards.

Correspondence received: None.

Public comment: None.

Board discussion:

Jim stated he did the onsite report, and it looks like a good spot, township road, not even a ¼ mile off the County road, good spot.

Ken stated the application says this described as a small-scale operation.

Rudy, correct, he and the boy. Building pallet material.

Ken asked if he will be sawing up boards and timbers?

Rudy, yes, we don't build the pallets, just saw the boards for it.

Andy, so, you don't cut the logs, you have them delivered?

Rudy, correct.

Roger asked how big of an engine, circle saw or band saw?

Rudy, circle saw.

Roger stated diesel engine, the exhaust must have a muffler, as you have a pretty close neighbor.

Rudy, has one now and we have no plans of taking it off.

Ken asked if they had been to the township and they were okay with this?

Adam, on August 11th

Andy the main thing is the noise.

Rudy, engine is on the inside of the building.

Ken moved to approve with the stated six conditions, Roger seconded.

Conditions:

1. Hours of operation shall be restricted to 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM CST, Monday through Saturday.
2. Operation of the sawmill shall be conducted within a permitted structure.
3. Outdoor storage of products shall be allowed but shall be conducted in compliance with Section 9.01B of the Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance.
4. There shall be no loading or unloading of materials within the road right of way.
5. The engine powering the sawmill shall include the use of a muffler.
6. Applicant shall abide by all other 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. Jim noted the application will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on August 16th, 2025.

Ken motioned to adjourn and Andy seconded. Voice vote to adjourn, no dissention heard. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.