

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

March 5th, 2026

Completed by: Sue Bertrand, P&Z Staff

All site visits completed by Adam Ossefoort and Jim Pratt on 2/26/2026

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 February 5, 2026 meeting minutes approved as amended. Lloyd seconded the motion. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

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

AGENDA ITEM 1: Harvey Raber-Section 26, Eagle Valley Township, Site Address: County 20, Clarissa, MN 56440 **PID:** 07-0030100

1. Request for CUP to manufacture and repair wooden pallets with proposed 60' x 120' shop with a 60' x 6' overhang in AF-1 Zoning District

Harvey was present as the applicant.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. The staff 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. 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. All outdoor storage must be placed on the west and north sides of the proposed structure.
4. There shall be no loading or unloading of materials within the road right-of-way.
5. Establishment of additional driveway accesses must be approved by the road authority.
6. Applicant shall abide by all other applicable federal, state, and local standards.

Correspondence received: Yes, letter from Loren Fellbaum. This letter may be reviewed in full upon request at the Planning and Zoning office.

Public comment:

Bryan Pesta half mile to the West. Has traffic concerns with that curve and concerned for accidents. He travels on that curve all the time and is wondering if that is going to be addressed. He noticed the applicant already had materials out there, and asked what effect that has on his application?

Adam stated we do tell them they can bring in materials for building, but not to start the project as the applicant runs the risk of it being denied.

On Site Visit Report by: Jim Pratt and he stated it was basically a hay field. He suggested talking to the County Engineer on placement of the second driveway. This report may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning office.

Board discussion:

Ken asked to see where the driveway was now.

Adam, just off the South end of the trees and showed photos on the overhead.

Andy, kind of an "s"-curve.

Ken suggested adding a condition that they consult County Engineer on the placement of the second driveway.

Roger, the road either curves one way or the other, looks like there is good visibility where it is, then up there on the North, there is good visibility.

Andy agreed to consult with County on placement.

Ken, no one is close enough to be bothered by dust or noise.

Tim agreed with amended condition #5.

Ken motioned to approve, Roger seconded with the 6 conditions as amended.

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. All outdoor storage must be placed on the west and north sides of the proposed structure.
4. There shall be no loading or unloading of materials within the road right of way.
5. Relocation of the existing driveway to a location approved by the road authority. Establishment of additional driveway accesses must be approved by the road authority.
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 March 17th, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 2: USS Eagle Bend Solar LLC-Section 02, Wykeham Township, Site Address: 14910 380th Street, Eagle Bend, MN 56446 PID: 28-0001100

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

Jean and Tena were present as the applicants.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. The staff 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. Submittal of an interconnection agreement with the electric service provider prior to issuance of land use permits.
2. Development and submittal if 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 too 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 a road maintenance agreement with Wykeham Township and submittal of the agreement to Todd County prior to issuance of land use permits.
6. 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.
7. Noxious weeds and invasive species shall be controlled at all times.
8. Applicant must abide by all other applicable federal, state, and local standards.

Tena confirmed the staff report was accurate.

Site visit completed for US Solar by Adam Ossefoort and Jim Pratt on 2/26/2026

Correspondence received: Yes, from Todd County Corn and Soybean growers, Chris Odden with the Todd County Assessor’s office and a letter from Jean Greenwaldt. Adam read all three into the record. These may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning office.

Tena Monson presented information regarding this project and solar in General. This informational slide may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning office. Addressed the fire situation, which if any, would be only ground fire underneath and will be contained on site for control by the fire department.

Public comment:

Dale Katterhagen, had concerns, gave an example of the poplar trees to use for paper, back in the 80's. The quality was not there for sale and it created problems, left poplar plantations all over and that was not a good deal for the County. Solar has the same allure. Heavily subsidized, energy produced goes back on the lines. Puts the financial burden on all of the neighbors, the profit margins are slim, just thinking, be careful.

Dave Harren, nearby landowner, concerns about run off as it leads right to his place, concerns about weed control and this will not help the community. This is a twenty-year thing that has happened time and time again, it is not "if", it is "when". Sometimes he thinks of putting his land in, as well, but it is not going to help the community.

Tom Henrich, has grandson who works installing solar panels and must wear a hazmat suit if panels break. Down in Arizona built the big solar farm and it overloaded the system, and had to triple the size of system. Found there are different grades of panels, el-cheepos, and ones that follow the sunlight and also some with the heaters to melt the snow off. If you're going to put up el-cheepos, you will get el-cheepo in return. Same thing with wind power. There are heavy metals in these panels, an off grade of lead, if we start putting lead back into the system that is not a good thing. They will preach one way and what he has learned is they are not as safe as they are preached, they are.

Bob Byers, staff note, the minimum tree height must be stated. Took six years for a six-foot tree to grow. More details on decommissioning, monstrosity if left out there. We need more information.

Aaron Wendell, what is the County's definition of a variance?

Adam read from the ordinance.

Aaron stated it really doesn't seem to pertain to this. Why have a moratorium if we are not going to follow it? Tornados, hail and winds have blown shards of glass onto neighbor's land and cannot grow potatoes on that land.

Board discussion:

Jim went through his site visit report, this report may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning & Zoning office. He stated that when we developed the Solar ordinance, we invited everybody, townships, cities and we all came together meeting after meeting, and decided it would be an allowed use in Ag districts but no Solar Farms on Prime Farmland. Now, are we going to ignore what we came up with? He stated he had a problem with that. We asked the community when we developed our ordinance. He does realize the Board of Adjustment granted the variance but has a problem with that.

Andy stated he needs to see the reasoning behind the Board of Adjustment's decision for granting the variance and would like a copy of the minutes.

Adam stated he could do that.

Jim asked what the Comprehensive Plan has to say about solar farms.

Tim questioned whether the application demonstrated a need for the proposed use and if the decommissioning plan has been adequately addressed. He further noted that the County is dealing with MPCA and they are talking about closing our landfills and some decisions will need to be made.

\$19,000 a year for the County seems like a nice number, but that same farmland generates jobs from feed, fertilizer, equipment repair, trucking and could be in the same ball park figure for our local jobs from farming. He can find a lot of local negative impact, and this opens the door, although this seems to be well thought out and reviewed. He further agreed with the ten-foot-tall trees at the date of planting, people would rather see a nice grove of trees instead of solar farm. He agrees that snow drifting could be an issue for the Township.

Jim heard a tree can produce a snow drift ten times the height of a tree.

Adam does not have an accurate measurement for a snowdrift.

Tim, not trying to make it difficult for a county resident.

Roger, who is the one who says it is Prime Farmland?

Adam stated that the prime farmland acres are mapped and identified as prime by the USDA.

Tena, Solar farm is on 55 acres, approximately. Tena also asked for clarification on if the discussion should be held to just the CUP and not the variance that was previously granted.

Adam confirmed that the discussion should remain on the CUP request.

Lloyd stated he hates to drive by Solar Farms. He thinks it is ugly.

Ken, decommissioning, how far down will you be digging?

Tena, low enough to be able to farm it, 3 to 4 feet, and they leave the bottom of the pole in the ground so as not to disturb the lower soil layers.

Ken, are panels considered impervious surface, for Mr. Harren's questions, concentrate and run-off?

Harren stated water will run into his ditch.

Adam read the definition of impervious out of the ordinance.

Roger assumed it is similar to a deck, water is still displaced even though there are spaces between boards.

Ken, talking about screening, there should be a condition that there must be a written agreement with the township.

Adam stated to keep in mind, we must be able to enforce the condition.

Ken, are we asking for more than one row of trees for screening. Where?

Adam the ordinance requires along the road right of way.

Andy, just the solar panel area distance?

Adam, yes.

Ken stated it should be along the south side as well.

Adam, how many rows?

Ken initially suggested 3 rows of trees, further discussion amongst the board concluded that two rows is appropriate.

Tena proposed 4 – 6 feet upon planting, so they do not lose the time if they need to replace the ones that don't make it.

Adam suggested whatever SWCD recommends for trees, as Dylan provided, alternating in an offset manner.

More discussion on tree screening.

Tim asked Tena what she meant by “these are going to happen regardless”.

Tena, State law requires it of MN Power. The most challenging aspect is “to win over” the landowner. Lack of demand, we are at the end of negotiations. MN power is expecting them to deliver.

Tim agrees with Harren and Jim, the public supported to not take Prime Farmland, and the first request off the bat is for a Solar Farm on Prime farmland.

Andy two fronts: Saw a number 20 million capital cost. Looking at decommission number 1.25 million, will that be enough including inflation?

Tena explained the decommissioning value of 1.25 million is generally the higher number in MN.

Andy stated the safety isn't there.

Discussion on Solar Ordinance.

Public member asked, where is US Solar located?

Tena, the main office is in Minneapolis. There are many other locations throughout the Country, many out east.

Andy, the references to a time frame are around 25-30 years, but not solid.

Tena, in her opinion, the backstop is 25-30 years in the unlikely event. With repowering and upgrades, it could be longer. None of us have a crystal ball.

Andy, it could be 100 years.

Tena, we assume a 35- year life matches the panel life. There are some Counties that have a term life, but not in Todd County. Reminded this farmland has a low yield, has been wet and not high producing. They did not believe it was Prime Farmland.

Andy mentioned the maps on the environmental reviews that parcel 28-0001600 was also reviewed. Andy wanted to confirm that that parcel is not a part of this application. It was confirmed, only parcel 28-0001100 is involved with this application.

Bob requested the minutes be given to John Lindemann, attorney, for review on the decision, and he would also like a copy of the BOA minutes from January 22, 2026.

Lloyd, questioned the post removal process.

Tena offered to bring more information on that.

Tena added she will bring more info on drainage and will also bring her engineer. Will address Bob Byers' questions. She wanted to mention that she is familiar with the panels used on the Becker project and that style of panel is not being used on this project.

Tim hates to see all this acreage going to someone outside of the County.

Tina offered to table.

Ken motioned to table until next month and 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.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Jacob Swartzentruber-Section 36, Reynolds Township, Site Address: 21431 221st Avenue, Long Prairie, MN 56347 PID: 20-0040500

1. Request an after-the-fact CUP to operate a sawmill for wholesale and retail with proposed 40' x 44' shop addition in AF-1 Zoning District

Jacob was present as the applicants,

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. The staff 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. 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.

Public comment: None.

Board discussion:

On Site Visit Report by: Jim went through his site visit report. This may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning office.

Ken asked if the sawmill will be indoors?

Jacob, all enclosed.

Correspondence received: None

Roger motioned to approve, Lloyd seconded with the conditions as presented.

1. Conditions: 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.

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 March 17th, 2026.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Amendments to Article XII Regulation on Cannabis Businesses, Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance.

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

Correspondence received: Yes, Halbersma letter was read into the record. This letter may be read in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning office.

Andy, no language to limit the number of cultivation sites?

Adam, that's correct, only retail can have limits applied.

Andy brought up precedence.

Bob, Bruce township has a proposal in front of them, and they are following the County Ordinance, so there is a sense of urgency to set these forth. To request 40 acres will be limiting, but a lot easier to enforce and a lot easier to regulate.

Roger, feedlots must have enough land available to spread the manure, that is why there is a certain number of acres required.

Ken, the Department of Agriculture office thinks differently than the Office of Cannabis Management.

Bob, a long time ago, a kid had an amazing garden, nothing stopped other kids from sneaking in there at night and helping themselves. The THC in Cannabis is much more potent these days and who is to stop people from helping themselves in the middle of the night just cutting flower off those gardens?

Barb Becker noted that there is definitely a smell from cannabis cultivation and should be factored into the site limitations.

Bob, cannabis grown in MN must sell in MN, formerly 5% THC is being sold as 25% to 30% THC and is a much higher level of THC if young people got into a field.

Andy, it rivals crop engineering.

Bob stated he could harvest two acres of sweet corn in a day, by hand, he thought maybe the size of acreage should come into play.

Barb, commercial verses industrial, should it be industrial, and not rural? She'd rather it be closer to cities.

Adam stated we do not have an industrial zoning district but allowed commercial "uses" in some districts.

Ken, should we require 40 acres in commercial to plant indoor?

Andy, we can't look too crazy or they will think we are trying not to allow it.

Tim, we are trying to generate income for the County.

Adam asked if we are trying to create separate parcel sized for indoor vs outdoor cultivation?

Barb mentioned that the setback requirements should be looked at all. Particularly the distance to neighboring homes.

Jim confirmed that we are only looking for a larger parcel size requirement for outdoor growth.

Bob, if it is 40 acres, and a person pays a \$10,000 application fee, \$20,000 license fee and \$30,000 renewal fee, would it be cost prohibitive to even start the cultivation?

Ken it will for some, except for your big, out of state companies.

Bob, they are not going to be putting combines out there to harvest.

Ken, all for limiting outdoor, he considers 20 acres for commercial zoning.

Andy, we need language to secure the facilities.

Ken noted that outdoor growth is visible.

Tim suggested to establish it on a 40-acre piece, so neighbors can't see it as well.

Andy, smell would be less also.

Andy, start with 40.

Ken, 40.

Jim, 40.

Adam, both restricted to commercial, not expanding the outdoor cultivation into ag zones? And Indoor cultivation needs to meet all property setbacks.

Barb, they need a lot of space.

Adam, change neighboring setback?

Jim, 1000'.

Barb asked if they could apply for a variance to be allowed in other zones.

Adam stated that an applicant cannot apply for a use variance.

The existing setback requirements were reviewed. Jim stated that we might as well do 1000 feet for a setback to a neighboring residence.

Adam setbacks are measured from the growing area/facility to the local school, daycare, residence etc.

Barb, why not from the property line. There are a lot of children in the school district of Moran Township.

Adam read setbacks.

Jim, 1000 from school, daycare 500? So do you only have to be 500 feet from a daycare to grow Cannabis?

Andy, be restrictive, until reasons to loosen.

Adam highlighted and reviewed the areas that will need to be edited in yellow to be more specific. He will have Jason look through changes and try to get them in the next board packet.

Ken motioned to table, 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.

Adam noted to the board that annual training will be held on March 24th at 2:00 PM in the Commissioner's Room.

Roger motioned to adjourn and Lloyd seconded. Voice vote to adjourn the March Planning Commission Meeting, no dissention heard. Motion carried and meeting adjourn 8:37 PM.