

# EAST BETHEL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

May 27, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sharon Johnson, Glenn Terry, Tanner Balfany, Brian Downie, and Kory Jorgensen.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Grace Gerard, City Planner  
Kendra Lindahl, Interim Community Development Director  
Brian Mundle, City Council Liaison

## 1.0 Call to Order

Chair Johnson called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

## 2.0 Adopt Agenda

Chair Johnson noted that they will be reordering the agenda to discuss agenda item 6 last.

**Commissioner Terry moved and Commissioner Downie seconded to adopt the agenda as amended.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

## 3.0 Updates

Council Liaison Mundle updated the Commission on recent Council actions. He updated on the EDA members and noted that East Bethel has hired a new Fire Chief.

## 4.0 Approve March 25, 2025, meeting minutes

**Commissioner Balfany moved and Commissioner Terry seconded to adopt the March 25, 2025m regular meeting minutes as written.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

## 5.0 Interview of Planning Commission Candidates

### 5.a. Eldon Holmes

Gerard noted that Eldon Holmes is not able to attend the meeting, so she provided his letter of consideration for the Commission to review.

The Commission reviewed the letter of consideration.

### 5.b. Kristina Pagnac

Kristina Pagnac introduced herself to the Commission.

Downie asked why she is interested in becoming a Commissioner. Pagnac reviewed that she recently went through the variance process for a home project, and that sparked her interest in getting involved in the Commission.

Balfany asked what strengths she would bring to the Commission. Pagnac stated that she has worked in the claims side of the medical field and has done a lot of strategic planning. She noted that she has a strength in communication.

Jorgensen asked as a Planning Commission member, what she views her role as a representative of the City. Pagnac stated that she sees her role as being a bridge between the community and the City's vision. She noted that she would like to create simplicity for the community and help them with the next steps of their projects.

Johnson asked what her vision is for the Highway 65 corridor. Pagnac noted that her biggest priority is safety. She added that there are high rates of accidents on this road, and she would like to reduce these accidents. She loves the additions on Highway 65, but would like to keep the small community and maintain the best interests of residents in the area.

Terry asked if she holds any roles that would create a conflict of interest on the Planning Commission. Pagnac stated that she does not.

Downie asked if she had any preference for serving a partial term or a full term. Pagnac stated that she would like to serve a full term.

Gerard read the votes for the election of Commissioners as follows:

5 votes for Kristina Pagnac for the full term. 5 votes for Eldon Holmes for the partial term.

**Commissioner Balfany moved and Commissioner Terry seconded to recommend approval to City Council to appoint Kristina Pagnac for a full term and Eldon Holmes for a partial term.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

This item goes before City Council on June 9, 2025.

#### **6.0 Public Hearing – Consider a Zoning Ordinance amendment to regulate “barndominiums” in East Bethel**

This item was discussed following item 10.

#### **7.0 Public Hearing – Consider the request by applicant, D&D Construction LLC, for Site Plan, Conditional Use Permit (CUP), and Variances at 21476 Johnson St. NE**

Lindahl reviewed staff’s report stating the City received an application from Dan McConnell for a Site Plan, CUP, and four Variances to allow exterior storage for equipment on the property located at 21476 Johnson Street NE. A CUP is required for exterior storage in the B-3 zone in East Bethel. The applicant purchased an existing building and intends to use a large section of the property for exterior storage of equipment and other items related to their business.

Lindahl stated that the property is guided Commercial and zoned B-3- Highway Commercial. The properties to the north, south, and east are all guided and zoned the same. The property to the west is guided Mixed Use and zoned B-3 Highway Commercial.

Lindahl noted that there are four variances. The first variance is to allow storage in the front yard. The second variance is to allow exterior storage more than twice the square footage of the principal building. The third variance is to allow a six-foot fence in the front yard. The fourth variance is to allow chain link fence.

Lindahl discussed the options for the Commission's decision following the public hearing.

Johnson opened the public hearing at 7:31 p.m.

Balfany asked what kind of business this is. Dan McConnell, applicant, stated that they do dirt work and excavating.

Balfany discussed possibly not needing a variance for six times the structure for storage and just allowing two times if all the equipment fits in that space. Lindahl noted that they will still need the variance, but they can condition it on how much of the land can be used for the storage.

Johnson asked if the property has neighbors. Mr. McConnell stated that the neighbors are an industrial complex.

Terry noted that he is concerned about where the fence is set back from the road. Mr. McConnell explained that it is an industrial-grade fence, and you won't be able to see anything from the road. He added that they hired a survey company to design the fence so they could utilize more space.

Terry discussed that the property is screened in almost fully by the environment around it. He noted that he doesn't have any concerns about the type of screening.

Johnson closed the public hearing at 7:46 p.m.

Jorgensen noted that he doesn't think this will affect the neighborhood and thinks the Planning Commission should follow staff's recommendation on the front line.

The Commission discussed that they are leaving variance one as is for approval.

Johnson noted that they will scratch variance two from the resolution.

Lindahl explained the placement of the fence line setback on variance three.

The Commission discussed that they are leaving variance three as is for approval.

The Commission consensus was met to leave variance four as is for approval.

Johnson asked the applicant if he thinks he will be able to comply with the decisions from the Commission.

Balfany shared his reasons for not wanting to allow for all of the extra storage and not wanting to set a precedent.

Mr. McConnell stated that he sees no issue with compliance.

**Commissioner Johnson moved and Commissioner Balfany seconded to recommend approval to City Council with the conditions set forth in the provided Resolution, with variance two removed.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

This item goes before City Council on June 9, 2025.

#### **8.0 Public Hearing – Consider the request by applicant, Tom Carlisle of Sherco Construction, for a Concept Plan Review of a subdivision north of 217th Avenue NE, PIN 12-33-23-14-0002**

Gerard reviewed staff's report stating the City received an application from Tom Carlisle of Sherco Construction for a Concept Plan Review of a 3-lot subdivision located north of 217th Avenue. The subdivision application is for 3 lots for single-family homes.

Gerard stated that the property is guided Rural Residential and zoned Rural Residential in the Special Natural Environmental Area Overlay. The properties to the south and west are guided and zoned the same. The property to the north is guided and zoned as Natural Area. To the east, this property borders "Dellwood Country Estates", a subdivision in Linwood Township. She reviewed the concept plan. Staff has found that the plan does not meet the subdivision standards outlined by the Comprehensive Plan. She noted that staff recommends that the applicant update the plan before applying for rezoning.

Gerard reviewed the Commission's options for their decision.

Johnson opened the public hearing at 8:12 p.m.

Jason Rud provided a background of the project. He added that he doesn't understand the density of the lot standards. He noted that it is not consistent with previous projects.

Tom Carlisle, applicant, stated that he was under the impression that he could build 3 lots on the land and was not aware that he couldn't until after he purchased the land.

Lindahl explained that the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code contradict each other in this case. The Comprehensive Plan does not allow for 3 lots on this land, but the Zoning Ordinance does.

Kay Anderson noted that she sold the property to the applicant and was not aware that this was a part of the SNEA. She added that she had a very difficult time finding a map that showed that this was a part of the SNEA. She stated that she is in support of the 3 lots on this land.

Johnson closed the public hearing at 8:26 p.m.

Lindahl explained that, by State laws, the City has to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and follow the Met Council rules. She shared that the Zoning Ordinance is required to implement the Comprehensive Plan. She noted that she is concerned and thinks that this needs to be corrected to avoid confusion.

Johnson stated that she understands what is included in the staff report.

Terry noted his concerns with the Comprehensive Plan required by the Met Council. He noted that he is not concerned with following the Comprehensive Plan, and he would like to follow what is in the Zoning Ordinance.

Balfany shared that he agrees that they should follow the Zoning Ordinance due to the precedent set in the past. He stated that in his mind, the City is obligated to follow the Zoning Ordinance.

**Commissioner Terry moved and Commissioner Balfany seconded to recommend approval to City Council with the conditions set forth in the provided Resolution.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

This item goes before City Council on June 9, 2025.

#### **9.0 Public Hearing – Consider the request by applicant, Greg Underdahl, for garage size, metal siding, and impervious surface Variances at 138 Laurel Road NE**

Gerard reviewed staff's report stating the City received an application from Greg Underdahl, the owner of property at 138 Laurel Road NE, to allow for the construction of a new single-family home with 3 variances. The first variance is from the minimum garage size of 24' x 24' (576 sq. ft.) established in Section 22.7, Subdivision B of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a 12' x 34' (408 sq. ft.) single-car garage. The second variance is from the 25% impervious surface lot coverage standard as established in Section 57.10, Subdivision B of the Zoning Ordinance, to allow coverage of 27.6% of the lot area. The third variance is from the siding material standards established in Section 13.1, Subdivision A of the Zoning Ordinance to allow metal siding on the proposed residential structure.

Gerard stated that the 0.27-acre property is a through lot with 60.05 ft. of frontage along Laurel Road and 60.05 ft. of frontage along Maple Road. It is guided and zoned Coon Lake Residential (CL) and is entirely within the Shoreland Overlay District. The intent of the Coon Lake land use designation is to address the unique zoning and land use challenges associated with the many small, non-conforming lots in the neighborhood. The intent of the Shoreland Overlay District is to regulate development and maintain a high standard of environmental quality near bodies of water. The properties surrounding this parcel are all guided and zoned the same.

Gerard reviewed the Commission's options for approval or denial.

Johnson opened the public hearing at 8:49 p.m.

Maggie Wall stated that she is the applicant's, Greg Underdahl's, daughter. She provided the reason for needing a smaller garage. She noted that the siding is due to maintenance reasons.

Johnson closed the public hearing at 8:51 p.m.

Downie stated that the metal siding does not meet the uniqueness factor of the three-prong test. He added that metal siding does seem to be easier to maintain than regular siding. He stated that he sees no issues with the other two variances.

Balfany agreed with the statement about the siding. He also noted that he is not sure if he can support the impervious square feet and is concerned about again, setting a precedent.

Terry stated that in the Code, it states that the siding has to look similar to normal wood, vinyl, or masonry. He noted that since the metal samples look similar to those, they may not need a variance. He added that he supports the smaller garage.

Maggie Wall explained the need for an impervious surface.

Terry noted he feels that since the structure was already in place when the applicant bought the property, the City should approve that variance and allow for the extra impervious surface. He also stated that a 2% increase does not seem like a big deal for this property.

Johnson stated that she is comfortable with the variances as requested.

**Commissioner Terry moved and Commissioner Jorgensen seconded to recommend approval to City Council with the conditions set forth in the provided Resolution.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Johnson, Terry, Jorgensen – Aye; Downie, Balfany – Nay, Motion passes.**

This item goes before City Council on June 9, 2025.

#### **10.0 Public Hearing – Consider the request by applicant, Mark Fors, for rear setback and impervious surface Variances at 144 Laurel Road NE**

Gerard reviewed staff's report stating that the property is zoned and guided Coon Lake Residential within the Shoreland Overlay District. The intent of the Coon Lake zoning and land use designation is to manage development of the many small, non-conforming lots surrounding Coon Lake. The surrounding properties are guided and zoned the same.

Gerard stated that this building permit for this structure was issued in April 2024, and a Certificate of Occupancy was issued in November 2024. She noted that on April 14, 2025, the City became aware that a structure on the property at 144 Laurel Road was in violation of the City's 25' rear setback standard within the Coon Lake District. Upon review, staff confirmed that the home is encroaching on the rear property line. Staff also discovered that the property exceeds the allowed amount of impervious surface in the Shoreland Overlay District.

Gerard reviewed that the first is a variance from Section 51.7, Subd. B of the Zoning Ordinance to allow a setback reduction from 25 ft. to 9.3 ft. The second is a variance from Section 57.10, Subd. B of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for impervious surface coverage of 25.09%, exceeding the 25% limit within the Shoreland Overlay District.

Gerard reviewed the options for approval or denial of the two variances.

Johnson opened the public hearing at 9:09 p.m.

Mark Fors, applicant, stated that this is a tough situation for him. He added that they submitted all required paperwork for the setbacks. He noted that he was aware of the issue with the setback they would have made changes in the project. He stated that there is nothing else he could do to fix this situation.

Marcia Carson stated that this property is behind her house. She noted that the fence on this property is not straight and is close to her property. She stated the setback had not been changed when she was told it would be, and she would like the house moved.

Mr. Fors stated that the fence was reviewed before being built. He noted that only part of the fence is his and the other part is his neighbor's.

Johnson closed the public hearing at 9:30 p.m.

Terry stated that in his mind, the City caused the problem. He noted that he would be in support of approval.

Gerard explained that the setback was a significant encroachment that should have been caught in the plan review. She stated that they don't like granting after-the-fact variances, but it will cause issues down the road if he chooses to sell the home.

Balfany noted that due to a possible City error, he is in support of approving these variances.

Downie stated his agreement that, since it was a City issue, he would support the approval of the variances.

**Commissioner Terry moved and Commissioner Balfany seconded to recommend approval to City Council with the conditions set forth in the provided Resolution.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

This item goes before City Council on June 9, 2025.

## **6.0 Public Hearing – Consider a Zoning Ordinance amendment to regulate “barndominiums” in East Bethel**

Johnson asked Mundle if they should table this discussion for a later meeting. Mundle noted that they will need around an hour to discuss this topic, so they should table it and schedule to discuss it at a different meeting.

**Commissioner Terry moved and Commissioner Balfany seconded to table this item for discussion at a later meeting.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

## **11.0 Adjournment**

**Commissioner Balfany moved and Commissioner Terry seconded to adjourn at 9:46 pm.** Johnson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Johnson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

Submitted by:

Sylvia Rokosz

*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*