

The meeting was held in-person, participation via Zoom was not available.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Kris Kopitzke called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL** – Present: Justin Sykora, Kris Kopitzke, Sally Doherty, Chris Bursack, Kuchen Hale, Christian Dawson. Absent was Doug Parker, Alison Miller, Kate McGinn (excused). A quorum was present.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – City Administrator Ron Moorse, Mayor Bill Plamquist, City Planner Emily Herald.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** –

Add item 8A “casita ordinance”

**Motion/Second Hale/Bursack to approve the agenda for the February 2, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 6-0.**

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** –

**Motion/Second Sykora/Dawson to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 5-0-1 (Doherty abstain).**

6. **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

None

7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Conditional Use Permit Application for a private riding stable at 13750 15<sup>th</sup> St S

Chair Kopitzke opened the public hearing at 7:03pm.

Emily Herold, City Planner provided a summary of the application which is for a family farm consisting of a house, barn with indoor riding arena, accessory storage structure(s), exterior riding areas/pasture space, and land for cultivating alfalfa hay. The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit in order to establish the indoor private riding stable, which is a conditional use in the Agricultural district. The property measures 30.8 acres and is zoned Agriculture. Planning staff recommends approval of the requested Conditional Use Permit (with conditions), because riding stables are allowed as a conditional use in the Agriculture district and the proposed barn appears to meet all dimensional requirements.

Greg Swanson, applicant, was present for questions.

Chris Boylan, 13805, 15th St S, stated he has concerns about the size of the building, the parking areas and potential for traffic. Seems to be larger than necessary for personal use, does not want it to be a commercial business. Could it be downsized? Looking for protections in the CUP for the neighbors.

Greg Swanson, applicant, stated that the farm is for personal family use. They show horses and multiple family members participate in many different events.

Denny Mathe, 13854 15<sup>th</sup> St S, stated he has similar concerns that the size looks like it will be a business. Also concerned about outside lighting, manure management and truck and trailer traffic.

**Motion/Second Hale/Dawson to close public hearing. Passed 6-0.**

Hearing closed at 7:16 pm

Dawson asked about the acreage of hay production areas and pasture land.

Hale stated that the size of the building is dictated by training use.

Doherty asked about the size of the septic system; Claire Stickler stated that the County permits and regulates the septic based on the building size.

Sykora stated that this is in the ag zone and this is allowed use.

Hale stated that a manure management plan should be required as a condition to address groundwater concerns.

54 Doherty stated that this is a permitted use in the agricultural zone. There are guidelines for the pasture, the  
55 building size, and they are allowed to have trailers there.

56 Sykora stated that the exterior lighting should be reviewed and meet the rules of the lighting ordinance.  
57 Further discussion was held about the acreage and the definition of pastureland for the animal units. The  
58 planning commission agreed that the hay field land can be used as pastureland therefore meeting the  
59 definition and allowing the applicant to have up to 10 horses.

60 **Motion/Second Hale/Kopitzke to recommend approval of the CUP for a private riding stable with  
61 additional conditions and one additional finding:**

- 62 - **No commercial uses shall be allowed**
- 63 - **No organized events shall be allowed (this does not preclude the use of the facilities by friends  
64 and family)**
- 65 - **An exterior lighting plan shall be provided and the plan shall be subject to the requirements  
66 of the lighting ordinance and staff review and approval.**
- 67 - **A manure management plan shall be provided and the plan shall be subject to City review  
68 and approval in consultation with organizations with expertise in manure management  
69 planning, such as the U of M Ag Extension and the Washington Conservation District.**
- 70 - **The number of horses kept on the property shall meet the City's livestock ordinance  
71 requirements.**

72 **Additional finding:**

- 73 - **There are 20 acres suitable for pasture**

74 **Passed 6-0.**

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## 76 **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### 77 A. Casita ordinance

78 Commissioner Hale stated that she added this item to start discussion and see if the city council would  
79 consider an ordinance allowing a mother-in-law or secondary dwelling on large parcels of land as a way  
80 to keep agricultural land in the family.

81 Sykora stated he has concerns about what happens when the family changes.

82 Doherty stated that in the past when this was discussed there were concerns about renting and what  
83 happens when family members die.

84 Hale noted that the short-term rental ordinance covers the rental concern now.

85 Administrator Moorse stated that another concern has been that it would alter density.

86 The item will be added for consideration by the city council.

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## 88 **9. OLD BUSINESS -**

### 89 A. Draft Ag Conservation Development Ordinance

90 Administrator Moorse stated that the Ag Preservation committee met in January. In general the  
91 members thought the ordinance was good. Much of the discussion focused on types of agricultural uses.  
92 The Minnesota Land Trust is currently undertaking an in-depth review of the draft Agriculture  
93 Conservation Development ordinance and the draft Agriculture Conservation Easement agreement, as a  
94 key step in determining whether the Land Trust would hold the Agriculture Conservation Easements.

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### 96 B. Update on City Council Actions

97 Mayor Palmquist provided a summary of the January 20, 2026 Council meeting.

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## 99 **10. ADJOURN –**

100 **Motion/Second Doherty/Sykora to adjourn. Passed 6-0.**

101 Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

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Respectfully submitted by:

Afton Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes **APPROVED**  
February 2, 2026

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JY  
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Julie Yoho, City Clerk

To be approved on  
March 2, 2026 as (check one): Presented:     X     or Amended: \_\_\_\_\_