

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: Doug Parker, Justin Sykora, Kris Kopitzke, Kate McGinn, Chris Bursack, Kuchen Hale. Absent was Christian Dawson, Sally Doherty, Alison Miller. A quorum was present.

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

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** –
Motion/Second Sykora/Parker to approve the agenda for the March 2, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 6-0.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** –
Motion/Second Hale/Kopitzke to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 5-0-1 (Parker abstain).

6. **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

None

7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Minor Subdivision application to create one additional lot at 1010 Stagecoach Tr S

Chair Kopitzke opened the public hearing at 7:08 pm

Emily Herold, City Planner, provided a summary of the application which is for a minor subdivision at located at 1010 Stagecoach Trail South in Afton, MN. This proposal would split one lot (20.04 total acres) into two lots measuring 15.04 acres (Parcel A) and 5 acres (Parcel B). Access to all lots would be from existing roads and no new road infrastructure is needed.

The applicant was present for questions.

There were no public comments.

Motion/Second Kopitzke/Sykora to close public hearing. Passed 6-0.

Public hearing closed at 7:08 pm.

Discussion was held regarding the road right-of-way easement along Stagecoach Trl S that will have to meet the right-of-way requirements of Washington County.

Motion/Second Kopitzke/Sykora to recommend approval of the minor subdivision application at 1010 Stagecoach Tr S. Passed 6-0.

B. Variance Application for an Accessory Building at 2249 Neal Ave S

Chair Kopitzke opened the public hearing at 7:15 pm.

Emily Herold, City Planner, provided a summary of the application which is for a 50’ variance in order to build a 2,400 ft² livestock barn within 50 feet of the northern property line of the 30.3 acre parcel. The property owner has requested a 50-foot variance Per § 153.077, the proposed domesticated farm animal building is compliant with code requirements regarding size; however, domesticated farm animal buildings must have a 100-foot setback from all property lines. In addition, any accessory building over 1,500 sq. ft. must meet a 100 foot setback. The proposed barn location is within a stand of mature trees in the northwestern quadrant of the property. According to the applicant, the purpose of the variance is to avoid having to build the barn further south into the trees to meet the 100-foot setback, which would require further clearing. Alternative locations are not being proposed because the applicant has “invested thousands of dollars with prairie grasses and

55 flowers” elsewhere on the property. Alleged practical difficulty therefore comes from a desire to avoid
56 disturbance of existing vegetation.

57 Planning staff recommends denial of the 50-foot variance request, as the project does not appear to meet the
58 three statutory practical difficulty criteria for the following reasons:

- 59 • The proposed 2,400 ft² barn could likely be placed elsewhere on the property, as the lot is over 30 acres
60 and has plenty of buildable locations that would not require tree removal.
- 61 • Economic considerations alone do not constitute a practical difficulty. The applicant indicated that this
62 location was primarily chosen to avoid disturbing expensive prairie plantings.

63
64 Mike Schwartz, representing the applicant, was present to answer questions and explained why they are
65 asking for a variance. The property has a conservation easement on it that allows for one home and an
66 accessory structure.

67 Marjorie Wade, 13506 Valley Creek Rd S, neighbor east of the applicant. Stated she does not have an issue
68 with the setback request and that she is happy they are keeping the land in agricultural use.

69 No other public comments.

70 **Motion/Second Parker/Sykora to close public hearing. Passed 6-0.**

71 Public hearing closed at 7:23 pm.

72 Steve Knuth, applicant, stated that the main building needs a 100’ setback but the lean to portion is in the 50’
73 setback. He is trying to limit the amount of trees being lost and stated there is also an electric line and junction
74 box close to where they’d like to place the barn. There is a utility easement and gas line in the other potential
75 location; that along with the topography make this the preferred location.

76 Extensive discussion was held among the commission members on the building location and the type of trees
77 that could be affected. The utility easement information was not included in the application.

78 Sykora stated that this does not meet the criteria for a variance.

79 **Motion/Second Sykora/Bursack to recommend denial of the variance application per staff
80 recommendations as the project does not appear to meet the three statutory practical difficulty criteria,
81 and because the need for a variance could easily be eliminated by placing the barn elsewhere on the
82 property. Passed 6-0.**

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85 **8. NEW BUSINESS**

86 None

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88 **9. OLD BUSINESS -**

89 A. Update on City Council Actions

90 Council member Wroblewski provided a summary of the February 17, 2026 Council meeting.

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92 **10. ADJOURN –**

93 **Motion/Second Sykora/McGinn to adjourn. Passed 6-0.**

94 Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

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99 Respectfully submitted by:

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JY
Julie Yoho, City Clerk

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To be approved on

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April 6, 2026 as (check one): Presented: X or Amended: _____

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