



NORTH BRANCH —Minnesota—

Steve Cich
Chair

Nathan Ehalt
Commissioner

Ross Otto
Commissioner

Gary Schaefer
Commissioner

Open
Commissioner

**PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2025 @ 6:30 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH BRANCH IN THE COUNTY OF CHISAGO AND IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, August 5, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Steve Cich called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Gary Schaefer, Commissioner Steve Cich, Commissioner Ross Otto, Commissioner Nate Ehalt

Absent:

Remote:

Others Present: City Council member Patrick Meacham

Notes:

4. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Nate Ehalt

SECONDER: Ross Otto

AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt

ABSENT:

NOTES:

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of July 1, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes ACTION

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Gary Schaefer
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt
ABSENT:
NOTES:

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Public Hearing to consider a Home Occupation / Interim Use Permit for a Dog Grooming Business at 39479 Ash Ct ACTION

City Planner Ryan Saltis shared a PowerPoint presentation regarding the request to consider a Home Occupation/Interim Use Permit for a Dog Grooming Business at 39479 Ash Court, North Branch. The request is for a dog grooming business to be located in the basement of the residence. We have a section in our city code specifically for home occupations. The dog grooming operation will be located entirely within the basement of the primary residence. The aesthetics will remain unchanged from the outside, and it is not anticipated that there will be additional noise, smoke, dust, odor, or any other activity that affects the health, safety, and welfare of nearby residential properties. Traffic volume to the residents will be dependent on the number of clients that the business receives per day due to the grooming and pickup, and drop off of the dogs. The business plans show that at maximum, they will have one client per hour and a half.

The applicant for the home occupation permit is also the homeowner, and the home occupation will be the secondary use of the dwelling. The home is roughly 1638 square feet, and the home occupation can only account for 30% of the total floor area of the home. The plans that were provided show that the dog grooming business will take up about 150 square feet of the home. There will be some cars coming and going for pickup and drop off of dogs, based on the number of clients; one per hour, which means roughly five or six people coming and going per day at maximum. The home is connected to the city sewer services. It is anticipated that the excess demand with the current system will not be an issue. The home occupation is not anticipated to create any fire safety or health hazards that adversely affect neighboring property values. It is not anticipated that the business will cause any burden on the City utilities or be detrimental to the function of emergency services. The business plan does address an extra drain trap that will be used to mitigate the strain on the city services and potential backups. The residence is not located near any lakes, rivers, and is also not located within the floodplain of the City. There will be no outdoor storage, as all activities must be conducted indoors. There will be no additional employees other than the homeowner. There should be no exterior signage that advertises the business, and the homeowners must comply with all the criteria listed in Section 66-942 of the North Branch city code as it pertains to home occupations.

Commissioner Ehalt asked if there would be any overnight boarding as part of the business model, and Julie Nordquist, the homeowner and business owner, responded that there will not be any overnight boarding. Commissioner Ehalt also asked about a waste management plan for the pet hair and animal waste. The homeowner responded that there will be shampoo bottles and hair, but it shouldn't exceed her 40-gallon garbage can per week. The homeowner also mentions that she will have a 5-gallon bucket for animal waste. Commissioner Otto asked about when the homeowner has to take the dogs out to go to the bathroom, if they will be on a leash, and the homeowner responded that they would be leashed. The public hearing was opened at 6:51 pm. The public hearing was closed at 6:52 pm.

Motion by Ehalt to approve the Home Occupation/Interim Use Permit with the findings of fact.
Seconded by Cich. All voted AYE. Motion carried.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Nate Ehalt
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt

- b. Public Hearing to consider a Comprehensive Plan / Map Amendment and Rezoning from Rural Residential (RR) to Agricultural (AG) at 36000 Evergreen Ave ACTION

City Planner Ryan Saltis shared a presentation to consider a Comprehensive Plan/Map Amendment and Rezoning from Rural Residential (RR) to Agricultural (AG) at 36000 Evergreen Avenue. The owners are Craig and Cynthia Johnson. The land is currently rural residential, and the request is to rezone the property from rural residential to Agricultural. The applicants would like to diversify the current business on this property, which is a greenhouse, and include cannabis cultivation within the greenhouse as indoor cultivation. It's currently only permitted in the agricultural and industrial zoning districts. Ryan discussed that, considering the site from the development point of view, the parcel would have to remain primarily as a single-family residence, and development would be limited as the district does have a 10-acre minimum lot size. The most that the owners could do as far as subdividing would be four parcels. The density as a whole would not be impacted, and utilities would not be strained by this change. Agricultural zones are typically found in the NE corner of the City. The zoning districts are similar in purpose; however, the permitted uses for each district differ based on the zoning district use table in the city code. Agricultural zone parcels do show more permitted uses than parcel zones. Rural residential permitted uses in agricultural zone, parcels that are not permitted or conditionally residential include the following retail greenhouses, currently conditional use in rural residential areas would be permitted in a district for indoor cannabis cultivation, which is the purpose of this. It is not permitted in rural residential areas, but is in ag and then also, ag building accessory structures and liquid and gas fuel storage tanks. Approving the rezoning of this parcel would allow for the requested operation on this site. The parcel meets the requirements for rezoning to agricultural.

Commissioner Gary Shaefer questioned whether federal law prohibits cannabis agriculture. Community Development Director Nate Sondrol explained that the State Office of Cannabis Management signed rules and regulations, and the City has adopted those model ordinances. The request for this evening is for rezoning and reguiding.

Chair Steve Cich asked if it was a requirement that the growing has to be done inside greenhouses, or can it be done outdoors. Director Sondrol explained that it is allowed to be grown indoors or outdoors. The City code currently allows for the indoor and outdoor production of cannabis in the AG or the industrial zoning districts. The public hearing was opened at 7:04pm. The public hearing was closed at 7:10pm.

Commissioner Ehalt asked about the water consumption that would be needed for the greenhouses. The applicants explained that they would water every other day, so watering would be kept to a minimum. The applicant estimated 200-300 gallons, and they are on a well; they wouldn't be introducing any chemicals, as cannabis cultivation is very clean.

Motion by Cich to recommend approval of the comp plan amendment and rezoning wth the findings of fact.
Seconded by Otto. Motion carried.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Steve Cich
SECONDER: Ross Otto

AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt

ABSENT:

NOTES:

8. REPORTS

a. Design Standards

INFO

City Planner Ryan Saltis reported on the North Branch design standards. He explained that the current requirements have percentages for different zones and how they can lead to higher priced buildings. The City has gotten some comments in the past from potential businesses saying that they haven't looked at North Branch as a potential development area just based on the design and building standards, and that why we're visiting the design standards at this time. Ryan explained that there are currently three standard zones. Zone one is the strictest. It is mainly for the primary corridors and gateways, such as Main Street, highway 95 and then I35 so anything directly adjacent to those roadways that would be considered zone one. Zone Two is kind of a transitional area. It's a little more lenient. Zone two has 50% class one materials, about 50% class two materials. Zone three is industrial reader facing and low visibility areas.

9. NEXT MEETING - September 2, 2025 - 6:30 PM

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan Survey is on the City's Website. Nate asked the Planning Commission to spread the word and encourage people to complete the survey. The next steering committee meeting is on Thursday, August 7th at 5:30pm.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Planning Commission Meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Steve Cich

SECONDER: Gary Schaefer

AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt

ABSENT:

NOTES: