NORTH BRANCH
—Minnesota—

Sara Paul
Chair

Dennis Johnson
Vice Chair

Jessica Thelander
Commissioner

Marshall Saunders
Commissioner

Patrick Meachem
Councilmember

Cassie Keocher
Commissioner

Kevin Schieber
Mayor

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 @ 3:30 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, May 19, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

   Chair Sara Paul called the Economic Development Authority Meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Chair Sara Paul led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

   Present: Mayor Kevin Schieber, Commissioner Marshall Saunders, Councilmember Patrick Meacham, Commissioner Sara Paul, Commissioner Dennis Johnson, Commissioner Jes Thelander, Commissioner Cassie Keocher

   Absent:
   Remote:
   Others Present:
   Notes:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

   Provides an opportunity for the public to address the Council on items that are not on the Agenda. Please raise your hand to be recognized. Please state your name and address for the record. This section is for the express

purpose of addressing concerns of City services and operations. It shall not be used to clarify individual's views for political purposes.

5. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda — ACTION

RESULT: **Passed**
MOVER: **Jessica Thelander**
SECONDER: **Dennis Johnson**
AYES: **Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:
NOTES:

6. CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under Consent Agenda are considered routine and/or non-controversial and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Councilmember or citizen so requests, in which case the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.

a. Approval of April 21, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes — ACTION

RESULT: **Passed**
MOVER: **Jessica Thelander**
SECONDER: **Dennis Johnson**
AYES: **Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:
NOTES:

b. Approval of April 30, 2026 Special EDA Meeting Minutes — ACTION

RESULT: **Passed**
MOVER: **Jessica Thelander**
SECONDER: **Dennis Johnson**
AYES: **Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:
NOTES:

7. REPORTS

a. Chisago County HRA-EDA Update — VERBAL UPDATE

Nancy Hoffman, the Executive Director of the Chisago County HRA-EDA, gave the Chisago County HRA-EDA update.

Chisago County HRA-EDA is starting its strategic planning process, starting with hiring Chatfield LLC. The North Branch EDA will be contacted as stakeholders to participate in surveys. The HRA-EDA has some grant programs available; one is for entrepreneurs and new ventures, and the other is for small business building improvements, fourteen has been approved already. The HRA-EDA did a trade analysis, which the U of M did. The HRA-EDA is continuing to break down the report and develop a way to use the information to attract retail-trade-type businesses.

b. North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update VERBAL UPDATE

Mayor Kevin Schieber gave the North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce update. This Thursday is a business after-hours network event from 3:30 pm-6:30 pm. There will be appetizers and a complimentary drink ticket with a paid entry, along with exciting door prize giveaways at 6 PM. This is a great way to connect with multiple professionals for a relaxed networking experience.

c. North Branch Area Schools Update VERBAL UPDATE

Chair and North Branch School District Superintendent Sara Paul gave the North Branch Area Schools Update. The School District has had concerts for all of the students K-12th grade. On Wednesday night, we have scholarship night, where community members have generously donated towards the future of our students by giving away a lot of scholarships. Sara Paul wanted to thank three entities in particular, the North Branch Area Education Foundation, the Edelstein Foundation, and Max Malquist, who has generously donated to support student scholarships, financial literacy, and STEM.

d. EDA Executive Director Update VERBAL UPDATE

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the EDA Executive Director Update. Residential development activity remains very strong throughout the community, and we wanted to provide an update on a few projects currently moving forward.

Starting with the Meadows North Town homes project, construction activity continues onsite as they work toward paving and infrastructure improvements for the second phase of the development that was approved last November. The developer is also proposing a modification to the final plat, reducing the total number of lots from 105 down to 82. The overall layout and development concept would remain largely the same, but this adjustment would better align the project with market demand, home sizes, and building configurations while still meeting our density and development objectives.

Another project currently under discussion is a proposed residential development consisting of three apartment buildings located south of Ecumen on the east side of Falcon Avenue. The developer has submitted a request for Tax Increment Financing assistance. They will be meeting with the City Council tomorrow evening to discuss the application, review the process, and gain a better understanding of what the City is looking for and whether there may be a potential path forward for the site. I'd encourage any EDA members who are interested to attend that discussion.

Another project requesting TIF assistance is the Westside Commons senior housing development. This project is proposed for the south-west corner of Falcon Avenue and Highway 95. The current concept includes approximately 170 units of independent senior living west of Ecumen. The proposal also includes extending the roadway network and potentially connecting access up to Highway 95, which would help support future development opportunities across the remainder of the site. The developer has prepared a broader concept plan showing what the entire area could look like at full build-out, and staff will continue working with the developer with the expectation of bringing the request back to the City Council on May 27.

Mayor Kevin Schieber wanted to provide an update on the transportation and infrastructure funding request we've been pursuing at the State Capitol. We had requested approximately $4 million in funding for design and redesign work associated with the corridor project. Toward the end of last week, we believed the project would likely make the final bonding bill list, although we were uncertain what level of funding, if any, would ultimately be approved.

We did not receive final confirmation until Sunday following the joint meeting of the Senate and House Capital Investment Committees, but I'm pleased to report that the project was awarded $1 million in funding.

While it's less than the full request, this is still a very significant first step. We've been working on this effort for many years, and these funds will allow us to continue advancing the planning and design process while strengthening coordination with all of our regional and federal partners, including the Federal Transportation Board, East Central Regional Development Commission, Chisago County, and Isanti County.

This funding will allow us to elevate the project, develop more detailed plans, and better define the long-term vision for the corridor. It also positions us more competitively for future funding requests by demonstrating local and state investment in the project. As we continue seeking additional funding, we'll be able to present a clearer vision backed by stronger technical information and planning data.

This corridor is becoming increasingly important when you look at the amount of growth occurring in the north-west portion of the community. There are currently approximately 900 homes somewhere in the planning process in that quadrant alone, compared to roughly 1,300 total existing homes citywide. Combined with the anticipated expansion of the industrial park along 400th Street, improving connectivity and access in that area will be critical not only for transportation efficiency, but also for emergency response and public safety purposes. Those points have been strongly emphasized during our discussions at the Capitol over the past several months.

I also want to specifically acknowledge Matthew Hill for his work throughout this process. He's been heavily involved every step of the way — from coordination efforts and planning discussions to countless hours spent at the Capitol helping move the project forward. Matthew, your work has been greatly appreciated and has played a major role in helping us continue building momentum and achieving results for the community.

e. Consider approval of 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the approval of the 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease. The North Branch Economic Development Authority (EDA) has approved an annual lease, allowing for farming of land owned by the EDA in the North Branch Interstate Business Park. The agreement is with Mr. Barry Engdahl. Farming of the land with Mr. Engdahl has been part of the life estate agreement on the property. As a result, neither the EDA or the City may permit farming by any other person. Given this, Mr. Engdahl was given the go-ahead to commence farming activities. The life estate has a termination date in January 2025. Mr Engdahl has expressed a desire to continue farming the property.

Director Sondrol provided the lease agreement from previous years, where Mr. Engdahl paid rent to the EDA to cover the property taxes due for 2025, not to exceed $3,260. The lease agreement did not prohibit the EDA from marketing, selling, and developing land in the Interstate Business Park.

Recommended action is to discuss and recommend terms and consider approving a Farming Lease Agreement with Barry Engdahl, allowing farming of EDA-owned land in the North Branch Interstate Business Park.

Motion to approve the 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease.

RESULT: **Passed**

MOVER: **Jessica Thelander**
SECONDER: **Dennis Johnson**
AYES: **Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns**
Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher
ABSENT:
NOTES:

f. Storefront Facade Program ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave an overview of the Storefront Facade Program. At the last meeting, we briefly discussed the storefront façade program. We reviewed a variety of applications and also identified several areas where the application process and overall program could potentially be improved or updated. Since the program has now been in place for a little over a year, this seemed like a good opportunity to evaluate what modifications, amendments, or general reviews might be appropriate as part of the program's scope.

Just as a brief overview, the program currently offers forgivable loans ranging from $5,000 to $25,000. To date, we've funded five projects totaling approximately $83,000.

Looking at the application as a whole from an administrative perspective, there are a variety of smaller improvements we could make to streamline the process and make it easier for applicants. For example, we could develop more detailed checklists for application requirements and project eligibility standards. We also want to ensure there is consistent language throughout the application materials, particularly in areas where the program is referred to as both a loan and a grant. Those are relatively minor administrative items, but they would help improve clarity and consistency.

As far as larger discussion items, I think it would be helpful to receive direction from the commission on several topics.

One is the application timeline and review process. We touched on this briefly at the last meeting. Should applications remain open year-round with monthly or quarterly review periods? Should funding be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis? Or are there other approaches the commission would prefer? There are pros and cons to each option, and additional guidance would be helpful as we continue refining the program.

Another consideration is whether we should implement a formal scoring or evaluation system to provide additional transparency in the review process. I included several possible criteria for discussion, such as project visibility, property conditions, assessed value impacts, and other factors that could help guide application evaluations more consistently.

There are also a few policy-related questions that came up during our review. Currently, if a property is sold within the five-year forgiveness period, the remaining balance becomes due based on the declining forgiveness schedule of 20% per year. However, situations involving LLC ownership changes, refinancing, or similar transactions are not specifically addressed. We should consider whether those situations should trigger repayment requirements or whether they should be allowed under the program guidelines.

We also discussed projects involving multiple storefronts or parcels. For example, if a business combines adjacent storefronts into one redevelopment project, should the program allow funding assistance for both portions of the project? Similarly, if a property previously received funding through the program, should it be eligible for additional funding in the future?

Finally, we discussed the geographic boundaries of the program. When the program was initially developed, the focus was primarily on the historic downtown core, particularly along Main Street South, with less emphasis on portions of County 30. We discussed whether the program boundary should be expanded to include the entire central business district. Currently, the program does allow some discretionary flexibility if a project aligns with the overall goals and intent of the program.

With that, we're mainly looking for discussion and direction from the commission on these topics and any other items you would like staff to evaluate further as we continue reviewing the program. Looking to review this together for the June meeting.

g. Comprehensive Plan Update INFO

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the Comprehensive Plan Update. City staff have continued to work on compiling documents from the meetings, and those will be sent out to all the EDA members. This will give ample time for the June meeting, during which we can have a full discussion.

h. Marketing Strategy Plan ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the Marketing Strategy Plan and the overall budget and marketing plan for 2026. Nate discussed the marketing strategy for 2026, including the budget, outreach events, and the need for a comprehensive marketing plan. Director Sondrol asked the EDA their thoughts on looking at developing an RFP for marketing or if there are other items that they may want to consider, other than having a digital marketing campaign, looking at website development enhancements, and developing a digital marketing plan. Chair Sara Paul shared that she thinks it's critical that we have a comprehensive strategy for communication, and getting some professional help would be wise. It was a consensus amongst the EDA that the city should move forward to solicit those RFP's and get some quotes from marketing agencies.

8. CLOSED SESSION

Motion to enter into Closed Session pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c)at 4:25 PM.

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	**Jessica Thelander**
SECONDER:	**Dennis Johnson**
AYES:	**Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:	
NOTES:	

Motion to enter into Open Session at 4:44 PM.

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	**Patrick Meacham**
SECONDER:	**Jessica Thelander**
AYES:	**Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:	
NOTES:	

a. Closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of real property in the Interstate Business Park — INFO

b. Closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of real property at Outlot B, Cherokee Place 3rd Addition — INFO

9. NEXT MEETING - June 16, 2026

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Economic Development Authority Meeting adjourned at 4:44 PM.

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	**Sara Paul**
SECONDER:	**Dennis Johnson**
AYES:	**Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johns Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher**
ABSENT:	
NOTES:	