



NORTH BRANCH

—Minnesota—

Steve Cich
Chair

Nathan Ehalt
Commissioner

Ross Otto
Commissioner

Gary Shaefer
Commissioner

Open
Commissioner

**PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026 @ 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, January 6, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Steve Cich called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Steve Cich led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. OATH OF OFFICE

a. Oath of Office - Kelly Maurer

ACTION

The oath of office was administered to Kelly Maurer as the new Planning Commission Commissioner.

The appointment is a 3-year term and expires on December 31, 2026.

4. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Steve Cich, Commissioner Nate Ehalt, Commissioner Kelly Maurer

Absent: Commissioner Ross Otto

Remote:

Others Present:

Notes:

5. 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.

Steve Stelter, Tom Buck, and Michael Connor signed up for Public Comment.

6. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

Motion to add 9d under Reports for Planning Commission applications.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Nate Ehalt
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

7. 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 December 2, 2025 Minutes

ACTION

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Nate Ehalt
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Conditional Use Permit - Wireless Communications Tower

ACTION

City Planner Ryan Saltis presented the Conditional Use Permit - Wireless Communications Tower. Vertical Bridge (Applicant) has requested approval for a Conditional Use Permit to install a Wireless Communications Tower at PID 11.00223.00. A Conditional Use Permit is required for any antenna or other receiving or transmitting device exceeding a height of 75 feet from ground level. The tower is proposed to be roughly 180 feet in height. The purpose of the tower is to fulfill an increase in network demand for Verizon Wireless and to improve life/emergency service reliability in the area. The owner of the tower/compound is Vertical Bridge, while Verizon Wireless will have its equipment installed on the tower to provide the service. The parcel is currently vacant, with no existing homes or structures, and is owned by Earl and Deanna Halley. Vertical Bridge has a lease agreement with the parcel owners to place the tower/compound on the property.

Issue(s) to Consider

1. Land Use/Zoning and Surrounding Uses
2. Site Improvements
3. Sec 66-935 Towers - Requirements
4. Conditional Use Permit

Public Hearing was opened at 6:48 PM

Alex Truman, representing Vertical Bridge, spoke to the Planning Commission, explaining that they need to provide the necessary coverage and capacity that the Community relies on, and that this location has been deemed to be optimal for Verizon in order to be able to provide the best coverage or increase coverage and capacity possible. Chair Cich asked what the length of the lease is, and Alex replied that it is a 50-year lease initially.

Public Hearing was closed at 6:52 PM

Motion to recommend approval/denial to City Council, for a Conditional Use Permit for a Wireless Communication Tower at PID 11.00223.00 with the following conditions of approval.

1. The applicant shall comply with all applicable city, state, and federal regulations, including but not limited to building, electrical, fire, FAA, and FCC requirements. All required permits shall be obtained prior to construction.
2. No exterior lighting shall be installed except lighting required by FAA or FCC regulations. Tower lighting shall be oriented or shielded to minimize glare and prevent direct visibility of light sources from public streets and nearby properties.
3. Signage shall be limited to safety, identification, and regulatory compliance signs as allowed under Section 66-821. No advertising signage is permitted.
4. Any future modification that increases tower height, adds additional carriers beyond permitted loading parameters, or alters site layout beyond the approved compound footprint shall require review by the City and may require an amended Conditional Use Permit.
5. All conditions of approval are subject to modification by the City if necessary to protect public safety, health, and welfare or to meet future code requirements.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Nate Ehalt
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: None
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

b. Fairway Field - Preliminary Plat and Variance for Lot Depths ACTION

City Planner Ryan Saltis presented Fairway Field — Preliminary Plat and Variance for Lot Depths.

Larry Beach Construction, Inc. (Applicant) has submitted a request for Preliminary Plat and Variance approval for a new residential subdivision known as Fairway Field, located generally at the intersection of 412th Street and Flink Avenue. The Subject Property is currently undeveloped and is guided and zoned for Rural-Residential.

The Preliminary Plat proposes the creation of 13 residential lots (each exceeding 1 acre in lot size), new public streets, stormwater facilities, and associated utilities. Access to the subdivision is provided via 412th Street with two new internal public roadways, including Fairfax Lane and Fairway Court, as shown on the Preliminary Plat and Site Plans.

The applicant has also applied for a variance from the required lot depths for lots within Block 2 of the plat.

The applicant has submitted a complete application, including preliminary plat drawings, grading and erosion control plans, utility plans, landscaping, and tree preservation. Final Plat approval is subject to

City Council action and completion of all required conditions.

Issue(s) to Consider

1. Land Use and Zoning
2. Proposed Preliminary Plat
3. Plat Standards and Variance
4. Engineering - Public Streets, Utilities, and Stormwater
5. Landscaping and Tree Preservation

Public Hearing was opened at 7:02 PM

During the open public hearing, concerns raised during public comment included the potential impact of the development on local water tables; the fairness of changing lot size requirements over time; the location of septic systems and their possible effects on neighboring properties; long-term plans for extending City water and sewer services; and the accuracy of property lines, including how any potential changes could affect adjacent properties.

Public Hearing was closed at 7:33 PM

Motion to recommend approval to the City Council approving the preliminary plot for Fairway Field with the following conditions, 1- 3.

1. The Applicant shall address and comply with the City Engineers memo dated December 2, 2025.
2. All public improvements shall be constructed in accordance with City of North Branch standards.
3. A Development Agreement shall be executed prior to Final Plat approval.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Steve Cich
SECONDER: Nate Ehalt
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

Motion to recommend approval to the City Council approving the variance to reduce the lot depths for Fairway Field with the following conditions: the minimum lot depths in block 2, Lots 5, 6, and 7 must be at least 200 feet.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Steve Cich
SECONDER: Nate Ehalt
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

9. REPORTS

- a. Text Amendment - Surfacing Requirements

ACTION

City Planner Ryan Saltis presented the Text Amendment - Surfacing Requirements to the Planning Commission. City staff has been reviewing the City Code to clarify sections that may be confusing or misleading. One section that has repeatedly come up in discussions with developers is the surfacing

requirement in Section 66-855, particularly regarding whether parking areas and driveways in commercial and industrial developments shall be paved. As currently written, the surfacing section only specifies paving requirements for residential properties that are two acres or smaller. The code should more clearly state that parking areas and driveways for commercial and industrial zoned properties are also required to be paved. Clear surfacing standards help manage stormwater runoff, reduce dust and debris, and promote safe, organized parking and traffic circulation.

Sec 66-855 Surfacing currently reads as follows:

“All areas used for parking and driveways on residential lots 2.0 acres or smaller shall be hard-surfaced with bituminous or concrete pavement or equivalent pavement as approved by the City’s Public Works Director.”

City staff suggests this section be amended as follows:

“All areas used for parking and driveways on residential lots 2.0 acres or smaller, and on all commercial and industrial zoned lots, shall be hard-surfaced with bituminous or concrete pavement or equivalent pavement as approved by the City’s Public Works Director.”

City staff strongly supports the proposed text amendment, as the benefits to the City outweigh the potential drawbacks. Clarifying and expanding surfacing requirements will promote orderly development, reduce long-term maintenance and enforcement issues, and better protect public infrastructure and overall community quality.

Motion to recommend approval of holding a public hearing to address parking requirements.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Steve Cich
SECONDER: Kelly Maurer
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer
ABSENT: Ross Otto
NOTES:

b. Comprehensive Plan Update

INFO

City Administrator Matthew Hill presented the Comprehensive Plan Update. Sections 2 and 3 of the Comprehensive Plan is included in the agenda packet. It is highly encouraged that everybody take a look at the language within there. In a couple of months, we want to have a solid plan from this commission and anybody else that is participating in those sections to provide feedback and provide recommendations for the City Council.

c. 2026 Meeting Schedule

ACTION

Motion to accept the 2026 Meeting Schedule with rescheduling of November 3rd, 2026. meeting to November 4th, 2026.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Nate Ehalt
SECONDER: Steve Cich
AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer

ABSENT: Ross Otto

NOTES:

d. Planning Commission Applications

ACTION

An application was received for the Planning Commission Commissioner. It is a 3-year term. The Commission's past practices, commissions make recommendations to the City Council on applications that are received.

Motion to recommend Steve Cich to the North Branch City Council to remain on the North Branch Planning Commission.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Nate Ehalt

SECONDER: Kelly Maurer

AYES: None

ABSENT: Ross Otto

NOTES:

10. NEXT MEETING - February 3, 2026 - 6:30 PM

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 8:03 PM.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Nate Ehalt

SECONDER: Steve Cich

AYES: Steve Cich, Nate Ehalt, Kelly Maurer

ABSENT: Ross Otto

NOTES: