

PLANNING COMMISSION
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA
Regular Meeting – January 22, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Don Heinonen called the regular meeting of the City of Bemidji Planning Commission to order at **5:30 p.m.** Roll call was taken, and the pledge of allegiance was recited.

Members present: Faver, Heinonen, Lemmer, McCoy, Peterson, Meehlhause.

Members excused: None.

Staff Present: Planning Director Jamin Carlson, Assistant Planner Melissa Fahrenbruch, Planning Administrative Assistant Ainslee Krause.

Others Present: Troy Gilchrist of Town Law Center (via WebEx), Tim Marco of Marco-McClane (WebEx), Lucy Aveen-West of U-Haul of Northern Minnesota, Ron Seibel of North Country Snowmobile Club

AGENDA

Chair Heinonen called for any amendments to the agenda. Motion by **Lemmer**, seconded by **Meehlhause**, to approve the agenda. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

MINUTES

The minutes for the **December 18, 2025**, Planning Commission meeting were presented for approval. Motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Lemmer**, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

VISITORS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA: No appearance.

Election of Officers

Chair Heinonen called for nominations for Chair. (New officers seated at February meeting)
Meehlhause inquired if **Heinonen** would be willing to serve again, Carlson addressed bylaws.
Lemmer nominated **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Peterson**.
Meehlhause elected Chair by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Heinonen called for nominations for Vice-Chair. (New officers seated at February meeting)
Faver nominated **Lemmer**, **Lemmer** declined the nomination.
Lemmer nominated **Faver**, seconded by **Peterson**.
Faver elected Vice-Chair by unanimous voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Hearings:

PLANNING CASE: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT AND INTERIM USE PERMIT REQUESTS – AMERCO REAL ESTATE COMPANY:

Fahrenbruch presented the planning case request: Sahithya Cheruku, Amerco Real Estate Company representing U-Haul is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to construct and operate a Mini-Storage or Self-Service Storage business and an Interim Use Permit (IUP) for operating a Truck and trailer rental business on the property. The subject property is located at TBD Mag Seven Ct SW (PIN 800561200 & 800561300) in the City of Bemidji. Conclusions based on the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan were presented in the packet including conditions and findings of fact.

Commission members made the following comments:

- No comments.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to published notice, a public hearing was held regarding input on the request. Chair Heinonen opened the Public Hearing at **5:38 PM**, hearing the following comments:

- Lucy Aveen-West, company president of U-Haul of Northern Minnesota addressed Commission, stating she could answer any questions they had about the project.

Hearing no further comments Chair Heinonen closed the Public Hearing at **5:39 PM**.

Motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Peterson**, to recommend approval of the conditional use permit request for parcels 800561200 and 800561300, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Peterson**, to recommend approval of the interim use permit request for parcels 800561200 and 800561300, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **February 9, 2026**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

PLANNING CASE: FINAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT AND PLAT REQUESTS – MARCO MCLANE DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTING GREATER BEMIDJI

Carlson presented the planning case request: Tim Marco (Marco McLane Development) representing Greater Bemidji is requesting approval for a Final Planned Unit Development through a Conditional Use permit (CUP) & Plat (PUD/PLAT) to develop a multi-phase project which would include a YMCA Community Wellness Center and a hotel and convention center along with other future developments within the Urban Renaissance (UR) zoning district & the General Commercial (B-2) zoning district and the Shoreland Overlay. The subject property is located at multiple addresses off Minnesota Ave NW (PIN #80.00344.99, 80.00505.04, and 80.00505.05) in the City of Bemidji (also known as the railroad corridor).

Conclusions based on the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan were presented in the packet including conditions and findings of fact.

Commission members made the following comments:

- Commission and staff discussed the re-located multi-use trail.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to published notice, a public hearing was held regarding input on the request. Chair Heinonen opened the Public Hearing at **5:46 PM**, hearing the following comments:

- Tim Marco addressed the Commission regarding the changes to the project to both sides of Minnesota Avenue, the continued work with the State of Minnesota regarding the trail, the continued work with the City regarding required infrastructure, and the changes to the east side of the project area due to the hotel project.
- **McCoy** inquired about handicapped parking stalls, Marco responded.
- Ron Seibel addressed the Commission regarding the trail placement, curbs, curves, etc., that may affect grooming of the snowmobile trail.
- **Peterson** inquired about minimum requirements needed, Seibel responded.

- Macro addressed those concerns.

Hearing no further comments Chair Heinonen closed the Public Hearing at **5:52 PM**.

Commission members made the following comments:

- **Heinonen** addressed the changes to the trail and the trail groomer requirements.
- **McCoy** inquired if the traffic study had been completed before or after the addition of the hotel and convention center to the project. Marco replied that it was after.
- **Meehlhause** inquired of the Commission about the need to add a condition regarding the trail. Commission discussed.

Motion by **Peterson**, seconded by **Meehlhause**, to recommend approval of the Final Planned Unit Development through a Conditional Use Permit and Plat requests for parcel 800034499, 800050504 and 800050505, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Ayes: **Peterson, Meehlhause, McCoy, Lemmer, Heinonen, Faver**. Nays: **None**.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **February 9, 2026**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

OLD BUSINESS

PLANNING CASE: INTERIM USE PERMIT REQUEST – FIRST CITY CANNABIS – TABLED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Carlson presented the planning case request: Julie Canty representing First City Cannabis is requesting an Interim Use Permit (IUP) for operating a Cannabis Retail Business in a leased building. The subject property is located at 920 Washington Ave S (PIN 80.04204.00) in the City of Bemidji and is in the B-2 General Commercial Zoning District within the Highway 197 Overlay.

Conclusions based on the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan were presented in the packet including conditions and findings of fact.

Chair Heinonen addressed the need of a motion from the Commission to remove the case from the table for additional discussion.

Motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Lemmer** to remove the case from the table for further discussion. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Heinonen asked the Commission for comments toward the motion to deny as that was the motion on the floor prior to the case being tabled at the previous meeting and related to the Findings of Fact for Denial provided by staff.

Commission members made the following comments:

- **Heinonen** addressed the Commission regarding research he had conducted related to other counties and cities' determination of buffer zone measurements which determined multiple measurement methods were used by local governments across the state.
- **Peterson** addressed the Commission that the lack of defined measurement determination in the City's ordinance was too vague and would create problems going forward.
- **Faver** addressed the Commission regarding the fact that surrounding property uses may be conducted anywhere on a property, so structure to structure measurement is unfair to surrounding property owners.
- **Meehlhause** addressed the Commission regarding gray areas in the Finding of Facts for denial related to applying current ordinance to the present case.

- **Peterson** responded that setback measurements should allow property owners full use of their properties.
- **Lemmer** addressed the Commission regarding the complications between ordinance requirements versus personal opinions.
- **Faver** addressed the Commission related to the determination of morality in the Findings of Fact for denial.
- **McCoy** addressed the Commission regarding the need of the ordinance to clearly define its requirements.

With no further comments, Chair Heinonen asked if **Peterson** and **Lemmer** agreed with the Findings of Fact for Denial supplied by staff. Both stated that they did.

Motion by **Peterson**, seconded by **Lemmer**, to recommend denial of the Interim Use Permit request for parcel 8006420400, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion tied by the following roll call vote: Ayes: **Faver, McCoy, Peterson**. Nays: **Heinonen, Lemmer, Meehlhause**.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the **motion failed due to a tie vote** and that unless an alternate motion was put forth on which the Commission could vote, the tie vote would be forwarded to the Planning Board without recommendation.

Motion by **Meehlhause** to recommend approval of the Interim Use Permit request for parcel 8006420400, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. No second was offered.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **February 9, 2026**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

Commission and staff thanked the public for their attendance and reminded them that there is an opening on the Planning Commission and that a full Commission could avoid tie votes.

UPCOMING COMMISSION MEETINGS

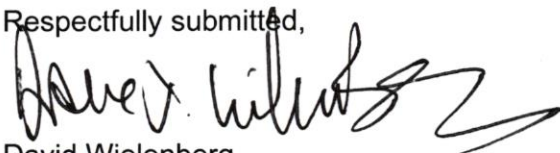
- Thursday, February 26, 2026 5:30 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting

Chair Heinonen addressed staff regarding the timeline of the zoning ordinance update. Staff replied that it is ongoing.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by **Lemmer**, seconded by **Meehlhause**, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at **6:15 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



David Wielenberg
Compliance Inspector and Site Analyst

PC Minutes approved and attested by: Michael Meehlhause
Planning Commission Representative