

PLANNING COMMISSION BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – October 23, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Don Heinonen called the regular meeting of the City of Bemidji Planning Commission to order at **5:32 p.m.** Roll call was taken, and the pledge of allegiance was recited.

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

Members excused: McCoy.

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

Others Present: Troy Gilchrist (via phone).

AGENDA

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

MINUTES

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

VISITORS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA: No appearance.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Hearings:

PLANNING CASE: INTERIM USE PERMIT REQUEST – NORTHWEST TIRE

Fahrenbruch presented the planning case request: Chad Burchinal representing Northwest Tire, Inc is requesting an Interim Use Permit (IUP) for operating Heavy Truck, Construction Equipment Service Business. The subject property is located at 840 Industrial Park Dr SE (PIN 800449200) in the City of Bemidji. This property is in the I-1 Industrial Park/Light Industrial Zoning District. Conclusions based on the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan were presented in the packet including conditions and findings of fact.

Commission members made 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 **5:36 PM**, hearing the following comments:

- Corey Grossman, president of NorthWest Tire, addressed the commission and noted that they leased the property after the June storm. Grossman expressed a hope for leniency on planting trees on the property. Grossman expressed tentative future plans of purchasing the subject property, tearing down their damaged building at their old location, and building an additional building on this site.

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

Motion by **Peterson**, seconded by **Lemmer**, to recommend approval of the Interim Use Permit request for parcel 800449200, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Ayes: **Peterson, Meehlhause, Lemmer, Heinonen, Faver**. Nays: **None**.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **November 10, 2025**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

PLANNING CASE: VARIANCE REQUEST – ERIK THORSON

Carlson presented the planning case request: Erik Thorson is requesting a Variance from the Shoreland lot width and lot size minimum standards to build a bedroom addition to the current house on an existing lot of record in the R-4 Moderate Density Residential zoning district and the Shoreland Overlay (General Development Lake). The subject property is located at 2114 Birchmont Dr NE (PIN #80.00537.00) in the City of Bemidji. The requested variances are as follows:

1. A reduction in lot size of 2,990 square feet per Section 28-352 requirement of 15,000 square feet in lot size for lots served by Municipal Sewer;
2. A reduction in lot width of 29.18 feet per Section 28-352 requirement of 100 feet in lot width at the ordinary high-water mark and at the building line;

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

Commission members made 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 **5:42 PM**, hearing the following comments:

- Erik Thorson, property owner, addressed the commission.

Hearing no further comments Chair Heinonen closed the Public Hearing at **5:44 PM**.

Motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Peterson**, to recommend approval of the variance request for parcel 800053700, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the packet. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Ayes: **Peterson, Meehlhause, Lemmer, Heinonen, Faver**. Nays: **None**.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **November 10, 2025**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

PLANNING CASE: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT REQUEST – PETERSON SHEET METAL

Carlson presented the planning case request: Peterson Sheet Metal is requesting a Conditional Use Permit for an existing legal non-conforming Contractor's Shop use to build an additional structure on the property. The subject property is located at 3728 Bemidji Ave N (PIN 800676000) in the City of Bemidji. This property is zoned B-1 Low Density Commercial District and the Shoreland Overlay.

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:

- Heinonen inquired about the applicant's plan for storage trailers stored onsite.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to published notice, a public hearing was held regarding input on the request. Chair Heinonen opened the Public Hearing at **5:49 PM**, hearing the following comments:

- Jaime Quello, representing Peterson Sheet Metal, addressed the commission and noted their growth and plan for an additional building due to their need to expand. Quello addressed that the aerial image in the packet is old, and they have slowly been moving trailers out to their other location on Carr Lake Road. Quello addressed that the goal is not to have trailers stored at the subject location.

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

Motion by **Peterson**, seconded by **Lemmer**, to recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit request for parcel 800676000, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented in the

packet. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Ayes: **Peterson, Meehlhause, Lemmer, Heinonen, Faver**. Nays: **None**.

Chair Heinonen addressed that the request would go before the Planning Board at their next meeting on **November 10, 2025**, at 5:30 PM for the final decision.

OLD BUSINESS

Development Code Review – Staff Update

Fahrenbruch provided an update regarding the review of the Development Code.

- The International Sign Association completed a preliminary review of the sign code.
- The city obtained the Local Climate Adaptation Grant through the MPCA and is working with Great Plains Institute, who completed a review of the code and provided suggestions regarding EV charging and the like.
- The parks superintendent is in the process of applying for the ReLeaf grant that would include an update to the city's tree ordinance. A subcommittee will need to be created to review those portions of the code.
- The state has made some changes to state statute, and this could potentially require a change to the city code regarding low-potency hemp edibles.
- Members discussed.

Further Discussion:

- Members and staff discussed the process regarding storm damaged/dilapidated properties.
- Members and staff discussed the rail corridor.
- Carlson addressed that the start date is tentatively November 3rd for the rail corridor, with the first step being to take the buildings down, the Final Planned Unit Development must still be completed, and test excavation was completed recently.

UPCOMING COMMISSION MEETINGS

- Thursday, November 20, 2025 5:30 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by **Meehlhause**, seconded by **Lemmer**, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at **6:08 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



Ainslee Krause
Planning & Building Administrative Assistant

PC Minutes approved and attested by:



Planning Commission Representative