

PLANNING BOARD PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – Monday, March 9, 2026

Pursuant to due call and notice, a regular meeting of the Planning Board of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Upon roll call, the following board members were declared present: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould (via WebEx due to personal reasons), Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.**

Staff Present: **Planning Director Jamin Carlson, Assistant Planning Director Melissa Fahrenbruch, Compliance Inspector & Site Analyst David Wielenberg, Administrative Assistant Ainslee Krause.**

Others Present: **Troy Gilchrist, Town Law Center PLLP (via WebEx).**

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Chair Eaton called for any amendments to the agenda. None made. Motion by **Peterson**, second by **Thayer**, to approve the agenda. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

Planning Board Meeting: **February 9, 2026**

Motion by **Thayer**, second by **Peterson**, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

No appearance.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDER RESOLUTION FOR VARIANCE REQUEST – 80.03017.00 & 80.03016.00 – DIVISION 25 LLC AND WILLOW CREEK CENTER

Fahrenbruch presented the first planning case request: John Johannson, representing Division 25, LLC and Willow Creek Center, is requesting a variance from the side yard property line setback requirements of Section 28-409 - Off-Street Parking, Loading and Surfacing Standards for the redevelopment of a parking area involving both properties. The subject properties are abutting parcels (parking area for a new Chipotle [former Rod's Meats] and the Willow Creek Center) at 1718 & 1710 Paul Bunyan Dr NW (PIN:800301700, & 800301600) in the City of Bemidji.

The Planning Commission decided that the conditions are sufficient for approval of a Variance from section 28-409 off-street parking, loading and surfacing standards of a redevelopment of a parking area setback to the side property lines from 5' to 0' on parcels (PIN:800301700, & 800301600), with the conditions and findings of fact presented in the packet.

Board members made the following comments regarding the request:

- Rivera complimented the improved safety of the plan based on the variance.
- Rivera inquired if green space brought about by the addition of a trail along Highway 197 would add to the property's green space totals. Carlson replied that it did not.

Motion by **Peterson**, second by **Thayer**, to approve **Resolution 2026-08** for a Variance from section 28-409 off-street parking, loading and surfacing standards of a redevelopment of a parking area setback to the side property lines from 5' to 0' on parcels (PIN:800301700, & 800301600) with the findings of fact and conditions as presented. Motion carried by the following voice vote: Ayes: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.** Nays: **None.**

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report

Carlson presented the Director's Report.

Board members had the following comments:

- Rivera addressed staff regarding the upcoming Beltrami County Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting. Carlson replied.
- Rivera inquired if there was any land use training planned for the Commission and Board members. Carlson replied.

Site Analyst & Enforcement Report

Wielenberg presented the Site Analyst & Enforcement Report.

Board members had the following comments:

- Prince inquired about the increase in businesses not getting sign permits and the possibility that it was a carryover from the storm. Wielenberg replied, explaining that ordinance required a permit anytime there were changes to the physical dimensions or location of the sign.
- Thayer inquired about the numbers and the timelines related to the clean-up cases throughout the City. Wielenberg replied.
- Thayer inquired about sidewalk clearing issues and a house along Bemidji Ave that had been burned and had broken windows. Carlson responded that Building Department was working with the property owner who had issues with the insurance company.
- Thayer inquired about the neglected state of the former Holiday gas station along Paul Bunyan Drive. Carlson and Wielenberg responded regarding the attempts being made to gain compliance.
- Rivera inquired about a house that is being built along Irvine Avenue and if it would be included in the Site Analyst report. Staff responded.
- Rivera inquired about the shrink-wrapped construction materials located by the South Shore Hotel. Staff responded.
- Rivera addressed Thayer that she would bring the sidewalk issues to the Parks Commission meeting later in the week.
- Rivera addressed that City staff attending the Beltrami County Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting should inquire if it would be possible to bring back Project Pride for at least this year to allow residents to clean up their yards of debris related to last year's storm as well as other items.
- Rivera inquired as to the process of how enforcement cases are begun and if anonymity can be granted to complainants. Wielenberg and Rivera discussed.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

- April 13, 2026 5:30 p.m. Planning Board Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by **Peterson**, second by **Thayer**, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote. Meeting adjourned at **5:57 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



David Wielenberg
Compliance Inspector & Site Analyst

PB Minutes approved and attested by:



Planning Board Representative