



**COTTAGE GROVE PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**12800 Ravine Parkway South**  
**Cottage Grove, MN 55016**

**September 22, 2025**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER – 7:00 P.M.**

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was held in the Council Chamber and telecast on Local Government Cable Channel 16.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Frazier called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Pradeep Bhat-Here; Ken Brittain-Here; Jessica Fisher-Here; Evan Frazier-Here; Eric Knable-Here; John Stechmann-Here; Terrence Woodman-Here.

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Emily Schmitz, Community Development Director; Samantha Pierret, Senior Planner; Max Erickson, Planner; Kelly Becker, Associate Planner; Justin Olsen, City Council Liaison.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

***Fisher made a motion to approve the agenda. Stechmann seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (7-to-0 vote).***

**4. OPEN FORUM**

Frazier opened the Open Forum and asked if anyone wished to address the Planning Commission on any non-agenda item.

Hello, Good Evening. Bonnie Matter, 6649 Inskip Avenue South, Cottage Grove, so are these Public Hearings, and I will be able to speak if I want to? Frazier replied yes, all four of the agenda items we have tonight are Public Hearings. Bonnie said thank you, that's all I had.

As no one else wished to address the Planning Commission, Frazier closed the Open Forum.

**5. CHAIR'S EXPLANATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS**

Frazier explained the purpose of the Planning Commission, which serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, and that the City Council makes all final decisions. In addition, he explained the process of conducting a public hearing and requested that any person wishing to speak should go to the podium and state their full name and address for the public record.

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND APPLICATIONS**

**A. 6219 Lamar Lot Split Variance - Case V2025-025**

**The Estate of Frances Ratzlaff: Benjamin Ratzlaff, Personal Representative, applied for a Variance to subdivide a 47.63-acre parcel located at 6219 Lamar Avenue South into two separate parcels resulting in one parcel under 5 acres,**

**which will be under the 5-acre minimum lot size allowed in the AG-1, Agricultural Preservation District, for an existing dwelling. The remainder of the parcel will continue to be used for agricultural purposes.**

Pierret summarized the staff report and recommended approval based on the findings of fact and subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report.

Frazier asked if there were any questions for staff; none were asked, then Frazier said I do have a question for you. So, it was in the packet as well as you said today that there are a number of other parcels in the area that are less than 5 acres, and so that's part of the reason why it wouldn't change the community. Do we know if those were created prior to the requirement that parcels be 5 acres, or were they also Variance Requests? Pierret replied said that's a good question, Mr. Chair. So, several of those parcels are in the R-1 District where there is a 3-acre minimum; however, there are a couple of parcels in the AG District that were created prior to our current Zoning Ordinances that are under that 5 acres, that are around 3 acres in size. Frazier said thank you.

Fisher said I'm glad you added that fourth stipulation with the Deed Restriction because we don't want to ever make it like a landlocked parcel, right? But how, that little strip that's along Lamar, how did that ever get divided into its own little entity there, or does it go with another parcel, or how does that figure? Pierret replied Commissioner Fisher, Mr. Chair, that is a very good question. As I mentioned, that parcel is actually part of a plat and that plat that it is a part of is actually on the west side of Lamar Avenue; so, conceivably at some point this was all one big plat, this sliver, as I call it, was platted and kind of remained as a remnant parcel. The Applicant was able to actually purchase this from the previous owner so they could have road frontage here. Fisher said it sounds like you're trying to avoid re-platting this particular parcel. Is there a specific reason why a plat wouldn't make more sense? Pierret replied so plats do take up a considerable amount of time and cost for an Applicant, and in this case, adding that fourth condition that these two pieces be sold together really will save the Applicant, in some time and monetary costs when we do see that this sliver again really does contribute to that road frontage requirement, as specified in the ordinance. Fisher said okay, thank you.

Woodman said just to make sure I'm understanding it fully as well, the reason for that 3-acre split is more of just a logical reason that that is the homestead area and we're not just expanding it to 5 to make up more room; so, that's the reason for the 3, not some other random requirement, correct? Pierret replied yes, Commissioner Woodman, that is correct. It is the most logical space to split this property, as you can see. Woodman said perfect, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any further questions, there were none, so Frazier thanked Pierret.

Frazier asked if the Applicant has anything additional they would like to add, and he asked him if he could just state his name and address for us, please.

I'm Benjamin Ratzlaff, I reside at 6225 Lamar Avenue South. Now, I'm obviously going to mention that this is basically to settle my mother's estate, and it's going to be split to her descendants. We're going to continue farming it, and there is going to be absolutely no change in the residence use or anything. I mean, it's going to essentially stay the same. That's about the only comment I have, just to settle the estate of Frances Ratzlaff, my mother. He asked if there were any questions. Frazier asked if there were any questions for the Applicant, but there were none. Frazier said thank you very much.

***Frazier opened the Public Hearing. No one spoke. Frazier closed the Public Hearing.***

Frazier asked if there was any further comment or discussion from the commission.

Stechmann said this seems like a logical result here, so we can avoid destroying some of the tiles property and also maintain the other trees and other things like that. That seems like this is the logical thing to do, so I can't imagine not voting for it. Thanks.

***Fisher made a motion to approve the Variance based on the findings of fact and subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report, as well as the condition that was added at the meeting on the Deed Restriction. Woodman seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (7-to-0 vote).***

## **B. NorthPoint Preliminary Plat - Case PP2025-023**

**NorthPoint Development (NP BGO Cottage Grove Logistics Park, LLC) has applied for a Preliminary Plat to modify the south and east lot lines of the Cottage Grove Logistics Park plat. This request is being made to fully encompass the improvements on Lot 2 of the existing plat, including private stormwater management, drive access, and utility lines.**

Becker summarized the staff report and recommended approval subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report. She said we do have representatives from NorthPoint here tonight as well for any questions. Thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any questions for staff.

Woodman said I think just one clarifier. This is only approval of the plat and not any of the future buildings or anything like that that'll be on there, correct? Becker replied correct, Mr. Chair and Members of the Commission, this is just the Preliminary Plat, adjusting those lot lines. Woodman said awesome, thank you.

Fisher asked at this time if the Applicant would like to add anything additional.

Planning Commission, my name is Charlie Cannon, I reside in Chicago, and work for NorthPoint Development. I just want to take a moment to thank Kelly and Emily and the City staff's hard work, they make it very easy for us to do business here. So, I appreciate your guys' time and explanation, and I'm here to answer any questions for you guys.

Frazier asked if there were any questions for the Applicant; Frazier said I don't see any, thank you very much for being here. Charlie replied thank you.

***Frazier opened the Public Hearing.***

Thank you very much for allowing me to ask some questions. Bonnie Matter, 6649 Inskip Avenue South, Cottage Grove, said I just have a few questions, I'll just put the questions out there: I'd like to know when the Alternative Urban Areawide, AUAR, will be updated to include the Data Center information, including the environmental information, and when it will be available for review and public comment. I'd like to know if we know who will occupy the Data Center at this time. I'd like to know how much water will the Data Center use per day, per year. I'd like to know where the water's going to come from. I'd like to know what is Cottage Grove's current water appropriation amount. Has the developer requested information on groundwater availability and local capacity? How many megawatts will the Data Center require? What type of backup power generation will be used during outages and how many? And if you're interested in learning more about any of this, there are many Data Center requests in Minnesota EQB Monitor right now. The City of Cannon Falls Industrial AUAR, in the September 16th Monitor, is worth reading. So, those are my questions. Thank you very much. Frazier thanked Ms. Matter and said she provided me with a copy of her questions, and so we'll include that in the record for the meeting.

***No one else spoke. Frazier closed the Public Hearing.***

Frazier asked Becker if she wanted to come back up, as a lot of Ms. Matter's questions were about a Data Center, and I know in response to Commissioner Woodman's question, you indicated that this is just essentially a realignment of lot lines at this point, correct? Becker replied yes, correct, Mr. Chair, Members of the Commission, we don't have an application for a Data Center now. Frazier said okay, so maybe that comes in the future, but today the application that we're looking at is should the Preliminary Plat be approved by City Council. Becker said correct. Frazier said all right, and any future Data Center that was going to come in or any new building that was going to be built would have to come through again for approval for that building and the Site Plan. Becker said correct.

Frazier said okay, and asked if there were any further questions by commission.

Bhat said so the existing two buildings, are they Data Centers? Becker replied no, they are not. Bhat said okay, and what happened to the original Lot 1, it's not showing on the map, so it's still a lot associated with this, or is it a separate lot now? Becker replied yes, Commissioner Bhat, that lot will still remain separate, and that won't be included into this new plat. Bhat said okay, thank you.

Frazier asked if there was any discussion or comments by commission; seeing none, I'll look for a motion then.

**Woodman made a motion to approve the Preliminary Plat subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report. Brittain seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (7-to-0 vote).**

### **C. Highnorth Dispensary – Case CUP2025-022**

**Astraeus Investment Group, LLC (DBA Highnorth) applied for a Conditional Use Permit to engage in cannabis retail sales and continue lower-potency hemp edible retail sales at their existing business at 8711 East Point Douglas Road South, Unit #108.**

Pierret summarized the staff report and recommended approval based on the findings of fact and subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report.

Frazier thanked Pierret and asked if there were any questions for staff.

Fisher said so, Highnorth is in that strip mall by Target, I was looking, but my pad is frozen so I'm having a hard time getting to the page, but with all the different circles and the radius to the daycare center, it looks like its just right there. So, how do you, do you calculate from like the front door? Because I mean I can imagine if it was down by where Chuck & Don's is, maybe the radius wouldn't qualify. Like how do you come up with that? Because it does look like it's pretty close. Pierret replied Commissioner Fisher, Mr. Chair, so on this map, the distance from a daycare is required to be 500 feet, and the yellow circle in the middle of the image is showing that distance to the daycare, and it is labeled as over 1,000 feet away. On this map, we labeled the exact distances, so that the commission and the public would know exactly how far away these businesses were. Fisher said so, where do you measure, do you measure from like the door? I mean, that is a large parcel, and there are multiple. Pierret replied good question. Yes, so, we measure from the storefront of the cannabis business to the property line of the use in question. For parks, we measure from the storefront to the park feature, so whether that be a disk golf hole or a picnic shelter, we're measuring to that specific item in the park. Fisher said okay, thanks for clarifying. I see now that it's double the distance that it needs to be, but it does look really close on that. Thank you.

Bhat asked what were the two compliance violations? Pierret replied those were age verification compliance violations. There's more information available from our Public Safety Department; however, the age verification was either not done or done improperly and during the Public Safety's inspections of the property, items were sold to minors. Bhat said okay, thank you. Where did you say this information was available? Pierret replied through our Public Safety Department, and the most recent violation in May was available, our City Council did take action at that time, in May of 2025. Bhat said okay, thank you.

Frazier asked Pierret if she knew if it was City Ordinance that clarifies the 500 feet from a daycare? Pierret replied in the State Statute, 500 feet is the absolute maximum that we could go, and in City Code, they went with the absolute maximum from daycares. All of these distances are actually the absolute maximum allowed by Statute. Frazier said okay, and I couldn't remember if that's what we did when we adopted the City Ordinances on it. And is it just daycare centers or does that include licensed in-home daycares as well? Pierret replied it is only daycare centers in Business Districts. Frazier said got it. All right, thank you.

Fisher said okay, my question follows up with Commissioner Bhat's; so, the violations that happened, at what point do we become worried about those violations, those repetitive violations? I think you said that the Public Safety Department doesn't have any issues with this at the moment, but at what point does it become an issue? Pierret replied so, our Public Safety Director has informed us that they, as I mentioned, continue to work with Highnorth on compliance and everything. If there were a third violation within a year span, it would go back to City Council; the fine and the suspension would be greater. If there were a fourth violation, that's when the Public Safety Director has indicated that things such as revoking licensure would be implemented. Fisher said so, there is a specific framework in place with time constraints and number of violations? Pierret replied yes. Fisher said okay, perfect, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any further questions for staff, none were asked. Frazier thanked Pierret.

Frazier asked if at this time the Applicant would like to add anything additional.

Ladies and gentlemen of the commission, thanks for having me today, appreciate it. It's been a pleasure to work with the City on this. It's been a long road, we've gone through a lot with the changing from hemp to cannabis and things like that. We've moved locations to stay compliant. It's been a treat to work with you all, so I appreciate everyone that worked on our project. I just

wanted to open it up; my name is Tyler Thompson, by the way, I'm the co-owner, I grew up here in Cottage Grove, went to Park, but I wanted to open myself up for questions if there are any.

Frazier thanked Thompson. Are there any questions for the Applicant?

Bhat said so, following up on those violations, what steps are you going to take to avoid further compliance violations? Thompson replied that's a great question. So, at the time, we did not have any actual scannable ID software built into our system, and that's something that after this violation we did add, in two different forms: 1) Our new cannabis specific platform that we use for our point of sale actually requires an ID to be scanned in, in order for a transaction to begin. So, what we will do in our plan is to have a vestibule system where the customer comes in, we have a secretary that will check the ID before the customer then gets buzzed into the rest of the building, which will require verification before entering. 2) We also have an audit trail system built into that, so we can go back and provide any ID ever scanned into our system and the timestamp. Bhat said thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any other questions, and none were asked. Frazier thanked Thompson.

***Frazier opened the Public Hearing. No one spoke. Frazier closed the Public Hearing.***

Frazier asked if there was any further discussion or comment by commission

Stechmann said it seems to me that the Applicant, Mr. Thompson, has adequately addressed the concerns that were raised, and so that's to his credit, that sounds like a very good and safe mechanism. I do know that there are criminal penalties for people who sell improperly alcohol or what have you, and so, there's also those types of considerations that also will deter like unauthorized sales. So, otherwise, I think that everything else is in order, I'm prepared to vote in favor of this. Frazier thanked Stechmann, asked if there were any further comments; seeing none, Frazier said he would look for a motion.

***Stechmann made a motion to approve the Variance subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report. Knable seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (7-to-0 vote).***

#### **D. Grey Cloud Elementary – Case SP2025-024**

**KOMA Architects and Engineers, on behalf of South Washington School District ISD 833, has applied for a Site Plan Review for building additions at Grey Cloud Elementary, located at 9525 Indian Boulevard South. The site improvements include approximately 6,505 square feet for a gymnasium/storm shelter and a 3,467 new classroom addition. The Site Plan Review request also includes minor reworking of the drive lanes within the northeastern and northwestern parking areas and the relocation of a playground.**

Erickson summarized the staff report and recommended approval based on the findings of fact and subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report.

Frazier thanked Erickson and asked commission if there were any questions for staff. Bhat said so there's a proposal for moving a playground from an existing location to a new location, right? My question is does it need to be done? I mean, can't they have two playgrounds, is there a requirement to move the playground? Erickson replied no, it is not a requirement. This is something that they have proposed, and I might invite the Applicant up to explain, but the playground is going to be closer to the new classroom addition, which would be utilized by the Special Education students. Bhat said okay, so there is no requirement to tear down the existing playground? Okay, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any further questions for staff, and none were asked. Frazier thanked Erickson and asked at this time if the Applicant would like to add anything additional; he said I'm seeing shaking heads back there, okay, so seeing none, unless there are questions from commission or the Applicant, and there were none.

***Frazier opened the Public Hearing. No one spoke. Frazier closed the Public Hearing.***

Frazier asked if there was any further comment or discussion by commission.

Fisher said I'll just say that the application seems pretty straightforward, so I don't have any questions.

***Fisher made a motion to approve, subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report. Bhat seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (7-to-0 vote).***

## 7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

### A. Approval of the August 25, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

***Knable made a motion to approve the August 25, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Fisher seconded. Motion passed unanimously (7-to-0 vote).***

## 8. REPORTS

### A. RECAP OF SEPTEMBER 2025 CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Schmitz summarized the actions taken at the September 3 and September 17, 2025 City Council Meetings.

Council Member Olsen said thank you very much. As I typically do, I open myself up for questions from you on anything that may be going on in the community, and I'm happy to answer if I can. Before I do that, though, just a couple of items that I would like to note: First of all, if you're interested, this coming Thursday, September 25, we have our Public Works and our Parks Open House, that will be held at the Public Works garage, which is located at 8635 West Point Douglas Road, here in Cottage Grove. For those of you who have not been there before, it starts at 3:00 p.m. and it goes until 7:00 p.m. We have a sensory friendly hour from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., so if you have members of your family who may struggle with a little bit of sensory overload, that first hour there won't be all the flashing lights and the noises and those sorts of things. So, people can still come and enjoy the Open House, look at the trucks, talk to our staff members, etc. without the distraction of all of the other goings on that could overload somebody's senses if they are sensitive to that. There will be games that take place down there, you'll have the opportunity to spend a little time looking at all of the various Public Works vehicles, including our brand new double-axle trucks that we received after purchasing three years ago. So, we're really excited that we actually got those in time for this year's snowplow season so we could an extra snowplow route. But tons of really cool things to do, the Parks Department will be down there, they always have some fun games for the kids; well, I'm a kid, too, I guess, because I like them, too, but there's certainly plenty to do, so I would encourage you all to attend.

I also wanted to note that September 15 through October 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month, and as a City Council we passed a proclamation declaring Hispanic Heritage Month here in the City of Cottage Grove. So, we wanted to make sure that we acknowledged the fact that we do have a very vibrant Hispanic population here in the City, it continues to grow, and we're grateful for all of the contributions, not just here in Cottage Grove but across the State of Minnesota and our nation, on behalf of our friends with Hispanic heritage. I am not one of those people, therefore I do sunburn when the moon is out, but I have a great deal of respect for a lot of my friends who have Hispanic background, and I'm grateful that we passed that proclamation. Also, today happens to be Rosh Hashana, so for those of you of the Jewish faith, we want to wish you a happy new year because tonight is when that celebration begins.

A couple of other items of note, just with regard to policy issues. As Emily mentioned, we had a 5-0 approval of the 2026 budget with a 2027 preliminary budget. So, what that means is we set the ceiling, we can't go any higher, but we can certainly come in lower if we choose to with regard to our 2026 Levy. We took a lot of different things into consideration, and I know I mentioned this at the last Planning Commission meeting as well, we took the Polco survey, the community survey that was done, and really put a lot of stock into what our residents said that they value most about our community. For example, Public Safety received a 91% rating for something that the public here in the City of Cottage Grove values; so, when we looked at making investments, making investments in Public Safety was right at the top of the list. Additionally, we had a great deal of approval for our Parks system, so naturally, we followed suit and we made significant investments in our Parks and our trail system here in the City. Of course, Public Works and making sure that on those snowy days, which we haven't had many of in the last couple years, but it sounds like we might this year if you believe the old Farmers Almanac, I should have asked Ben when he was here, he knows; Ben is a good friend, and he used to work down at the golf course, and that man has an intuition for weather like nobody you've ever met. I don't know if it's the farmer in him or if he's just gifted that way, but he's like Radar from MASH, for those of you old enough to remember when that was, he knows when snow's coming. But we are very glad to know that we've been able to

invest in the equipment that we need in order to keep our City safe and keep our roads clear and make sure that everybody can get to work, etc. So, with that, I will open myself up for any questions you might have for me.

Frazier said thank you and asked if there were any questions for Council Member Olsen.

Fisher said we had a resident talk about Data Centers earlier. That's a little bit out of left field for me, so I'm wondering has the City been approached by anybody who is looking to put in a Data Center? Are there certain, I know they're kind of a hot button topic, are there discussions in place? I mean, what do we do as a City? Council Member Olsen replied in my time as a member of the City Council, we've been approached several times by individuals who are interested in having a conversation about Data Centers. Data Centers are a little bit interesting when it comes to development because they don't generally produce many jobs, and they take a significant amount of resources to operate effectively in most cases. I don't want to paint with too broad of a brush because I'm sure as you know as Planning Commissioners, every application is unique and has its own different details, but up to this point, no, we really haven't had any major dialogue with anybody about a Data Center. So, that was a little bit out of left field for me, too, I guess, but could it happen? Sure. Somebody could put in an application, absolutely; at this point, though, I'm not aware of anything.

Fisher said I feel like for cannabis, for example, when that was coming up, nobody really had any regulations or nobody really knew like what was going to happen next. Do we feel like that's kind of where the Data Center thing is at, like if there's something that does come before us, are we going to have a framework to be able to? Council Member Olsen replied yeah, we have a very strong framework for span of control and influence around how a development that might include a Data Center would come to pass. It goes through the same regulatory processes, everything else that comes before us, and that would include involving the Planning Commission. It could certainly include other local and State agencies, it include the County, it all depends on the specifications of the application, of course. So, again, without painting with a broad brush, I feel pretty confident that if somebody did bring an application forward, we would certainly have the wherewithal to analyze it very closely and determine whether or not it was a good fit for our community. Data Centers are interesting as well because the people who operate Data Centers have to have certain parameters in place before they can even consider that as an end use, and some communities just don't have that, they don't have the infrastructure, they don't have the ability to host a Data Center. So, could we have a conversation? We certainly could, but I can't even speak to whether or not we would be able to meet their needs until such time as something would become concrete, which at this point, I'm not aware of anything. Fisher said okay, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any further questions for Council Member Olsen, but none were asked. Frazier thanked Council Member Olsen for being here. Council Member Olsen replied thank you guys very much, appreciate your hard work.

B. RESPONSE TO PLANNING COMMISSION INQUIRIES - None.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION REQUESTS

Bhat said so, when Bonnie was speaking, she mentioned about AUAR, with the expansions. What is it and can we access it? Schmitz replied Mr. Chair, Commissioner Bhat, an AUAR is a planning tool that we use to do a review of an area with potential development scenarios. In this particular Business Park, an AUAR was completed 15, plus or minus years ago, it's required by State Statute to update those studies every five years; I believe the last update to the Business Park AUAR was in 2022, so the next update to that AUAR is in 2027. What that work does, Commissioner Bhat, is it allows us to evaluate from an environmental and any other impact of potential development scenarios, which then really helps us to complete that work ahead of a development coming in, knowing the potential impact; and then we have a mitigation plan that's tied to that study that any development is required to follow as a part of their development. Bhat asked can we access the 2022 AUAR? Schmitz replied I am happy to send a link; Bhat said thank you.

9. ADJOURNMENT

***Stechmann made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Brittain seconded. Motion passed unanimously (7-to-0 vote). The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.***