



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

October 27, 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-Excused, Absent.

Members Absent: Terrence Woodman

Staff Present: Emily Schmitz, Community Development Director; Paul Sponholz, City Engineer; Crystal Raleigh, Assistant City Engineer; Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director; Dave Thiede, City Council Liaison.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Brittain made a motion to approve the agenda. Stechmann seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (6-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. No one spoke. 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. Capital Improvement Program 2026-2030 - Case CP2025-027

The City of Cottage Grove has applied for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to amend the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for 2026-2030.

Raleigh summarized the staff report and recommended approval. Dockter answered questions regarding parks and park facilities.

Frazier asked if there were any questions for staff.

Brittain said it's kind of hard to tell from the picture, but asked if on the back side of the Kingston Park Building, where the actual playground is, will there still be a shelter-type area, kind of open but protection from the rain, giving some shade; that's there currently, and the building might have it but you can't really see the other side. Does that question make sense? So, on the back side, is there going to be some shade protection area where you can sit and watch the kids play, or is that gone with this new building style? Dockter replied so, the building itself will not have shade around it. So, the back side of the building that you're referencing right now, the back of the image here, that will be access to both the men's and women's bathrooms, which are considerably larger bathrooms than they are today. Right now, we have a plan for three shelters, to go in between the playground and the building. So, there will be three independent shelters; at one point, we had the awning connected to the building, and between cost and functionality, we kind of decided that, particularly with individual programming or rentals, to be able to have the three shelters servicing separate programs would be a good idea. So, that's what we transitioned to. Brittain replied okay, thank you.

Bhat said so, I do see there's a tennis court replacement on Highlands Park on the agenda, but it's two-or-three years down the line; but if you look at the tennis courts at that place, its already really bad. So, any chance that you will move some of these projects up? Dockter replied so we do analyze all of our courts every year, so, yes, there's a possibility that could move. It wouldn't move up to 2026, but again, we'll look at them again in the spring and see how things have shifted; and then we either repair as best we can or we shift projects, and sometimes we shift projects entirely. It doesn't have to be a court for a court, it might be you know what? This playground's doing okay, this court's not doing okay, we have to flip those things. So, we look at all that. But if you have specific concerns when you see things, I tell people let us know because we inspect things, we get out there, but sometimes it's amazing how quickly sometimes pavement can go from safe and fine to oh, my gosh, the crack opened up. So, let us know. Bhat replied thank you, one more question. So, the two Zambonis at the Ice Arena will actually be replaced? Dockter replied yes, we actually have three ice sheets there, so we have one unit per rink, that services each rink. So, the two that are there now are both coming up on their 20-year life expectancy, so we'll replace those. And they do have a little resale value, so we'll get some resale value out of those, too. Bhat replied okay, thank you.

Knable asked for the Woodridge playground surface, is any equipment being swapped out during that as well? Dockter replied that would be in 2030, the \$500,000? Knable replied yeah. Dockter said, no, that's just the safety resurfacing. Mindboggling, isn't it? So, actually, we just invested into that maybe two months ago; they came in and they put a binder on it, like a thick binder. They did a lot of patching to fix a lot of the bad spots, and then they put a binder on it. So, we're hoping that carries us another five-to-seven years, but I had to put something in there to get it on the table. Knable said thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any further questions about parks and park facilities; none were asked. Frazier thanked Dockter, and Dockter replied all right, good night.

Frazier asked if there were any questions about the second half of the presentation.

Brittain said you mentioned Mill and Overlay, you mentioned Total Reconstruction, is there also just an overlay, does that still get used, or? Raleigh replied yes, our Streets crew does what they call a thin overlay, and that's a project that they do based on what they're seeing out in the field and some PASER ratings that we do annually. It's just we do this internally with our own staff and funds from that Roadway Maintenance Fund are used to fund the materials that are used, but our own staff is able to provide that thin overlay. Brittain asked do you recall how long the thin overlay is supposed to extend the life of the road before it needs to be worked on? Raleigh replied sure, it's a relatively newer thing that we've been doing, but we've been getting five, six years out of those thin overlays. They've been a really great tool in the toolbox when it comes to Pavement Management. Brittain said okay, and in regards to those three things, is the Total Reconstruct the only thing that gets assessed, or are there any assessments involved with the Mill and Overlay? Raleigh replied great question, Commissioner Brittain, the only assessments come with the Pavement Management Projects or if there's a big reconstruct, like the 80th Street project, that also has some assessments involved; but Mill and Overlay is definitely not assessed and those thin overlays are also not assessed. Brittain replied okay, thank you, so that was that question. On a different note, you showed a light for the Ravine Parkway connecting your east Ravine Park entrance. So, up at the top of the hill, County Road 19 and East Point Douglas. Raleigh said yes, at the Shoppes at Cottage View? Brittain replied yes, right there. So, you've got a signalized intersection or a signalized stopping point right at the park entrance, correct? Raleigh replied that is correct. Brittain asked so is there concern that causing cars heading north to stop on that because that's a pretty reasonable grade approaching this; in icy conditions, I'd be concerned that you might have some issues with actually causing a vehicle to stop there and then get going again. Is there not a concern with that? Raleigh replied sure, this is super conceptual at this stage. I don't know that that close and the grades coming to an intersection certainly haven't been looked at with this project yet. So, we're pretty far out there, but in general, expected traffic volumes are kind of warranting a

signal there but that could change, too. Brittain said a roundabout, and Raleigh said it could be a roundabout, I wouldn't put it past us. Brittain said thank you, I would love that. Brittain said all right, third thing, the water softener. Just out of curiosity, I use way more water on my yard annually than I do not on my yard. So, when you're talking about softening water, is it to the level that I currently soften my own water to, or is it to some other level of reduced hardness from where we exist now? I'm just curious at how this water that's going to go on peoples' yards is going to be softened, if it gets done, and how does that process take into consideration that water usage? Raleigh replied Commissioner Brittain, that's a fantastic question that I wish I could answer. I do not have those types of details on the water softening, do you? The person she asked replied no. Raleigh said I'll have to get back with you, I'm going to check with Ryan Burfeind on that. Brittain said well, in the past, it seemed like that was more of a long-term dream, and this seemed a little bit more real. So, I just figured I'd ask because it was seeming a little more real than it has in the past. Raleigh replied yeah, in the couple years I've been here, it's been the last thing on the CIP; so, it's just something that hangs out there, at the end, and I don't know if it's any more real this year than it was in other years. But we are making room for it and planning for it to happen some day, but the level of softening I can't answer right now. Brittain replied okay, thank you.

Stechmann said just a brief question about the project planned for 80th Street next year, the overlay project. My recollection is that a portion of it, \$5 million, was planned to be paid by Federal grants. Has the City done any contingency planning in case that money suddenly becomes unavailable? Raleigh replied great question, and I am going to ask our City Engineer to see if he knows about that. Paul Sponholz, City Engineer, replied I wouldn't say that we've got any contingency plans, but every indication that we've gotten from the Feds at this time, it is there is no change in it, so we are moving forward with those plans. They keep telling us it's still okay, so we're moving forward that way. Stechmann said sounds good, thank you.

Bhat asked can you explain to me one more time what's the difference between Pavement Management against other road construction? Raleigh asked Bhat, Pavement Management or Mill and Overlay construction, which he confirmed. Raleigh replied so, Pavement Management is a much more comprehensive reconstruct of the roadway. So, in Pavement Management, we're taking all the pavement off, we're reconstructing the gravel base, recompacting it and bringing it back up. Also, once we have the pavement off, we are fixing any utilities that might have issues in the roadway, and we're also redoing curb and gutter along the side of the road, and any sidewalk that might need replacement in that neighborhood would get done at that time. Whereas with a Mill and Overlay, we're strictly stripping off the top two inches of pavement and repaving it. So, there are no utility adjustments or curb and gutter or anything in a Mill and Overlay project. Bhat said okay, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any other questions for Raleigh, there were none, so Frazier thanked Raleigh.

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

Frazier asked if there were any further comments by the commission.

Brittain said I'd just like to say great job. I mean, of the hundreds of pages in the packet, that was very well summarized and easy to understand. So, thank you for all the hard work. It makes it pretty clear that the value that these projects have and what's actually being done where in a very understandable format, so thank you.

Frazier said I'm just going to add my thanks. I know this is, a lot of the stuff stays the same every year and a lot of the dream kind of projects stay at the end of the project. It's always interesting to see how things move up, as needs kind of vary for the City and what's going to get funded and what's not, because obviously there's a lot of things we'd like to do, but it's what do we need to do to make sure that we're providing services that the people who live here expect. And, so, thank you for all of your work on that project, the two of you here, as well as the many other people who are not here who put together that presentation.

Brittain made a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to amend the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for 2026-2030. Knable seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

7. PRESENTATION

A. Draft 2025 East Ravine Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) Update

Schmitz provided a presentation on the East Ravine AUAR Update.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the September 22, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Fisher made a motion to approve the September 22, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Bhat seconded. Motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

9. REPORTS

A. RECAP OF OCTOBER 2025 CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Schmitz summarized the actions taken at the October 1 and October 15, 2025, City Council Meetings. She said with that, Council Member Dave Thiede is here with you this evening if you have any additional questions for him tonight.

Council Member Thiede said just to add a couple, somewhat significant things: You might have heard that Cedarhurst and Bellagala, they were having some issues and possible uncertainty of Federal funds, etc., so they had sent a note and said that they needed to back out of the deal. We are working with them on a couple different possibilities to kind of keep that in play because we pretty much all feel that that was a very good plan for that area, and I think it's one that the people around the neighborhood also liked. So, just to let you know, that is kind of continuing and we're doing some work with the owners on other possibilities. I know Director Schmitz has been relatively close to that project also. We did get a proposal at the Furber House, the new owners out there are proceeding with some plans to actually get that house fixed up, which would be nice. They do plan to use it for people who are having weddings and things like that, to kind of be like a rental, an Airbnb. So, that is also good news. Council Member Thiede asked if commissioners had any questions on other things that might be going on; I was going to mention as we were talking through the CIP, most of you are kind of veterans to that, too, you've been around for a while, and some of that is a wish list. There are some things that definitely need to happen, but there are some that definitely tend to get pushed out until we figure out how to get different financing. I remember some of the first times I saw it and I saw all that money, and I was like well, where the heck are we gonna come up with all that money? Well, you know, it's not all just us, we see how some of it is funded by Washington County, some of it is State funding, some of it are the grants and things like that. So, I'm usually asking a lot of questions on where the heck is the money going to come from, as when it's sitting out there in the public record with that much money on it, sometimes people start getting all wild about it. So, I'm pretty certain you guys all understand that kind of stuff.

Frazier asked if there were questions for Council Member Thiede.

Fisher said so, I've been seeing a lot more like e-bikes and e-scooters and small people that should not be riding them or driving them around. I've almost hit children driving these, like I'm just wondering, I actually said to my husband somebody is going to die on one of these things because kids take them, they don't know the rules of the road, they just don't know any better. So, I'm wondering if the City of Cottage Grove has any sort of plan or has considered or has started talking about if there's any sort of regulation or rules or something that we can do; I'm just afraid that a kid's going to get killed, like it's almost a daily occurrence on the social media platforms, somebody's been hit somewhere. I just feel like it's a huge danger in our community now, and I'm just curious to know how the City can help make some guidelines because these are new things, right, that we haven't had for very long, and so nobody knows how to behave themselves with them yet. So, how do we provide a framework for people? Council Member Thiede replied we are going to have more of that discussion, that topic has come up, and it's been recognized as something that we need to address because it is becoming more prevalent. You know, the first thing I'm thinking is that gees, they should be pedaling their bikes. Fisher said well, I was coming east on 80th in my neighborhood, I live on the west side of the highway, and there's the onramp to Highway 61, and they didn't even look, you know? It's just somebody's going to get killed, it's just a matter of time, and it's scary as a mom, you know, to think about, because we didn't have any of that stuff. There's no way to prevent it without some framework, so. Council Member Thiede replied I think that's going to come to like the Planning Commission, besides the Council having, I think we're scheduling a workshop on that soon. Fisher replied so, there are things that are starting to form with that? Council Member Thiede replied right. Fisher said, okay, thank you.

Frazier asked if there were any other questions for Council Member Thiede, none were asked. Frazier told Council Member Thiede all right, thank you for being here.

B. RESPONSE TO PLANNING COMMISSION INQUIRIES

Frazier said we had one request last meeting, and I think we resolved that, so I'll consider that resolved.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION REQUESTS

Frazier asked if there were any requests for staff tonight, and there were none.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Stechmann made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Fisher seconded. Motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote). The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.