

WRIGHT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting of: December 18, 2025

MINUTES

The Wright County Planning Commission met on Thursday, December 18, 2025, in the County Commissioners Board Room at the Wright County Government Center, Buffalo, Minnesota. Chairman, Dan Mol, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with members present: Jeanne Holland, Ken Felger, Charlie Borrell and Pat Mahlberg. Absent was Sandy Greninger & Dan Bravinder. Brian Wold, Assistant County Attorney, was the legal counsel present. Barry Rhineberger, Planning & Zoning Administrator, represented the Planning & Zoning office.

Chairman Mol took a moment to acknowledge member Felger and his years of service with the Planning Commission. He thanked Felger for taking on the role as Chairman when needed and doing a great job.

ACTION ON NOVEMBER 20, MINUTES

Holland motioned to adopt the minutes for the November 20th, 2025 meeting as printed. Seconded by Borrell.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. **GEORGE & DEBRA HATFIELD** – Cont. 10/23 & 11/20

LOCATION: xxxx 80th St NW and Baker Ave NW – Part of the SE1/4 of the SE 1/4 in Section 23, Township 121, Range 26, Wright County, Minnesota. (Maple Lake Twp.) Tax #210-100-234404, 210-100-234405, 210-100-234407. Property Owner: GEORGE P & DEBRA A HATFIELD

Petitions to rezone the properties from Suburban Residential-a (R2-a) to Suburban Residential (R-2), as regulated in Sections 155.028, 155.050 & 155.051, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: no representative

A. Rhineberger explained the applicants have requested the matter be dismissed and have submitted their withdrawal request form.

B. Borrell moved to dismiss the request, without prejudice, at the applicant's request. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. **JOSHUA PERLICH** – New

LOCATION: 2807 80TH ST NW – The East 660.00 ft. of the North 659.92 ft. of the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 in Section 27, together with part of the East 660.00 ft. of the SW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 in Section 22 and all in Township 121, Range 26, Wright County, Minnesota. (Maple Lake Twp.) Tax #210-100-223302 & 210-100-272207. Property Owner: GLENN H RAY

Petitions to convert an existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a landscape nursery, granted in 2003, into an Interim Use Permit (IUP) and expand the use to include a non-commercial contractor's yard, up to a 4,480 square foot building with a 1,392 square foot lean-to, and expansion of outdoor storage, as regulated in Sections 155.003(30), 155.031, 155.048(D) & 155.057, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Josh Perlich

- A. Rhineberger noted the property is 10.77 acres and located in Maple Lake Township. A nursery and landscape business was approved by the Commission in 2003. This request is to convert that permit into an Interim Use Permit and expand the contracting portion of the business into a 4,480 sq. ft. building, and 1,392 sq. ft. lean-to as well as expand the outdoor storage area. Rhineberger noted that part of the 2003 narrative didn't specifically approve a contractor's yard but did limit contracting equipment to be stored indoors and was done with knowledge that the business operator did not live at the site. This expansion is significantly related to the contracting portion of the business. He noted that if approval had not been given in 2003, this application would not be before the Commission as the business is not located on the homestead of the business operator but had been approved and is approved for limited contracting. Rhineberger explained no neighbors responded and the Township submitted a recommendation for approval.
- B. Perlich explained there was a barn that was used but a few years ago it did burn and is no longer used. They are planning to use this building for more indoor storage. He noted the property owner's son lives on the property and in the future he will own the business with the son. Perlich stated that the business is growing and they are running out of space, especially with the barn gone. The hope is that the new building will improve the visual of the site.
- C. No public comments.
- D. Mol addressed the Beacon aerial and questioned the amount of material stored outside and the vehicles in the yard. He asked if what they can see is material storage areas or material to be cleaned up. Perlich stated there are brush piles in the photo but those have since been burned and are gone and the vehicles would ideally go in the building. He explained there are some piles of soil, mulch and boulders as well as hardscape items, but they are not visible from the road. Rhineberger pointed out the original CUP stated that waste material of any kind cannot be brought onto the site, which would include wood waste and should not have even made it to the site. Perlich stated he was not aware of that condition. Mol suggested Perlich get updated on the existing conditions.
- E. Holland moved to continue the item to January 15, 2026 and conduct a site inspection to assess the current operation. Motion seconded by Borrell.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. **LEONARD E LUEDKE** – Cont. 11/20

LOCATION: 11093 COUNTY ROAD 17 SE – THE NORTH 447.15 FEET OF THE EAST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 36, TOWNSHIP 118, RANGE 25, Wright County, Minnesota. (Franklin Twp.) Tax #208-200-362105. Property Owner: LEONARD E LUEDKE

Petitions to rezone from Agricultural/Residential (A/R) to Suburban Residential-a (R-2a), as regulated in Sections 155.028, 155.047 & 155.051, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: no representative

- A. Rhineberger noted that at the site inspection, the Township was there and indicated that they had not made a recommendation yet and would like to have another conversation with the applicant. It was noted that Mr. Luedke did request the item be continued to the January 15th meeting for the Township to finish their review and provide a recommendation.
- B. Felger moved to continue the matter to January 15, 2026, for further Township review. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Due to the weather and items on the agenda Chairman Mol asked that comments be kept at three to four minutes for the next two items on the agenda as well as noting a form at the podium for them to sign their name and address.

4. **CHRISTINA CLARK** – Cont. 11/20

LOCATION: 17483 64TH ST SW– PART OF GOV'T LOT 1 AND 2 IN SECTION 06, TOWNSHIP 118, RANGE 28, Wright County, Minnesota. (Stockholm Twp.) Tax #218-000-064200. Property Owner: VIRGIL & ALICE SCHLOTTE REV TR

Petitions to rezone 4.50 acres of the property referenced as Tract A on a survey completed by Northstar Surveying, Job No. 2025107, from General Agriculture (AG) with a Residential-Recreational Shorelands District Overlay (S-2) to Commercial-Recreational Shoreland District (S-3), as regulated in Sections 155.028, 155.048 & 155.057, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Christina Clark

- A. Rhineberger noted the property is 39.188 acres, with the request tonight to rezone roughly 4.5 acres of the property from General Agriculture (AG) to Commercial-Recreational Shoreland District (S-3). The property is identified in the plan as AG and is currently zoned AG. It was noted that, unlike many rezoning requests, S-3 zoning is not typical in Wright County. Rhineberger could recall only one such request in the 26 years he has been with the County, which occurred in 2015 or 2017.
- B. Clark explained that she is the applicant requesting to rezone her property located on Collinwood Lake. They know and love their lake and believe they have designed a commercial shoreland plan that will be successful and bring both local support and tourism to the area. Clark explained that the S-3 zoning district is allowed under the ordinance, and that the State of Minnesota—known as the Land of 10,000 Lakes—has many lakes with the S-3 zoning designation. In working with the Township, it was critical to develop a comprehensive plan that demonstrated the need for commercially designated shoreland and ensured that the proposed water-oriented amenities meet the intent of the commercial recreation zoning. Clark went on to highlight the reasons for applying for this specific zoning classification. DNR Commissioner Sarah Stoltzman has stated that, *“Connecting people to the outdoors is a priority for the DNR because it is good for the state’s economy as well as the health and wellness of Minnesotans.”* The proposed plan focuses on water rentals, events, and lodging, all of which will be further refined through the Interim Use Permit (IUP) process. Clark noted that outdoor recreation is not only vital to Minnesota’s economy but also a fundamental part of everyday life. She emphasized the importance of economic growth for Wright County, citing Representative Don Gillman, who stated that this request *“offers additional lakeside amenities as well as much-needed housing for visitors coming to our community. We love that this will spur our economy in Wright County and keep people, dollars, and support for local businesses from going to neighboring counties.”* Clark also noted that the DNR website states that outdoor recreation is central to Minnesota’s identity, fundamental to the economy, and essential to health and quality of life. Through review and discussion with the Township Planning & Zoning Commission, it was determined that the S-3 designation is the best fit for the property and is consistent with the comprehensive plan and shoreline objectives. Clark addressed the Township Planning Commission’s justification for rezoning, noting that the S-3 map amendment on the shoreland portion of the property implements the comprehensive plan, matches the district purpose, protects public waters, and enables enforceable IUP conditions. The change also enhances economic vitality while preserving the character and environmental quality of the area. Clark stated that she presented the facts related to her property and noted that the proposed business would attract visitors from surrounding communities and bring tourism to the area, supporting economic growth. She reiterated that the S-3 zoning district is not a closed district and is permitted by ordinance. Clark stated that she believes she has met the burden of proof for both Wright County and Stockholm Township and ensured that the proposal conforms to Township ordinance requirements and is consistent with Wright County’s comprehensive plan.

C. Public Comment

- Scott and Nancy Elmquist – Scott Elmquist requested additional time to speak, noting that he had been delegated by several individuals to speak on their behalf. Member Mol stated he would prefer that individuals speak for themselves. S. Elmquist stated that he lives directly across from the proposed property and that the rezoning would adversely affect his property as much as, or more than any other property associated with the proposal. He noted his opposition to the rezoning request. He explained that his home is located on a short dead-end road and is surrounded by six neighboring properties, all situated on parcels of five acres or more. He stated that rezoning the property to commercial use would cause significant impacts and raised concerns for his family as well as other residents of Collinwood Lake. S. Elmquist identified seven areas of concern. First, he cited property depreciation, stating that an event center directly across from a residence would negatively impact the peacefulness and serenity of the area, resulting in a significant decrease in property values. He estimated a potential loss of approximately \$125,000 to \$200,000, with similar impacts likely to surrounding lake properties. The second concern involved local roads, noting that 64th Street functions more like a shared driveway for the six residents within the first quarter mile. He stated that wetlands along the road cause substantial upheaval in the spring and that increased traffic would exacerbate these conditions. He also expressed concern about the nearby intersection, which he described as one of the most dangerous in Stockholm Township, and raised public safety concerns related to increased traffic and the potential for impaired drivers leaving events. S. Elmquist also raised concerns about property management and oversight, questioning how renters and activities on the property would be monitored and controlled. He referenced a prior issue involving a local VRBO as an example. He further stated that he believes more than 100 families who are members of the Collinwood Lake Association oppose the proposed rezoning. Parking was identified as another concern. S. Elmquist noted that the initial proposal referenced parking for up to 165 vehicles, while the revised proposal shows 48 parking spaces. He recalled a comment from a previous meeting in which a Commission member stated they do not support approvals that create future issues or the need for variances. He expressed his understanding that any increase in parking would require a variance. S. Elmquist also noted concerns regarding the applicant's long-term vision, stating that the proposal includes plans for expansion. He noted that the Interim Use Permit (IUP) would be reviewed every three years and that this would require residents to remain vigilant and attend future meetings on an ongoing basis. Another concern raised was public access to Collinwood Lake. S. Elmquist referenced comments from Mr. Pfeiffer of Hometown Planning, advisor to Stockholm Township, who stated that the area has changed over the past 14 years since the last comprehensive plan was completed. S. Elmquist stated that he felt no meaningful data was provided to support that conclusion. He noted that Mr. Pfeiffer's primary reference was Governor Walz's promotion of the outdoor recreation industry, which S. Elmquist felt did not provide sufficient justification for the rezoning. S. Elmquist stated that Collinwood Lake already has three public access points, a campground with over 60 campsites, hiking trails, and a swimming beach, which he noted is frequently closed due to poor water quality. He stated that publicly available information indicates that Collinwood Lake is classified as impaired and experiences ongoing water quality issues. He questioned why additional recreational use would be considered on a lake with existing environmental challenges. While acknowledging that the area has changed over the past 14 years, S. Elmquist stated that he believes the changes have not been beneficial. He challenged the Commission to identify another lake of similar size in Minnesota that contains a large campground, three public access points, and a privately owned resort, stating that he was unable to find one. As a final concern, S. Elmquist stated that the proposed rezoning does not materially benefit residents of Stockholm Township. He cited the intent of the S-3 district, as outlined by Wright County Planning & Zoning, which is to provide suitable locations for recreational facilities that benefit both residents and tourists. He stated that he does not believe the proposed location meets that intent and asserted that the rezoning would result in negative impacts, including decreased property values, lake overcrowding, degraded water quality, increased noise, and public safety concerns. Member Mol requested that S. Elmquist conclude his comments, noting that he had exceeded the allotted nine minutes.

- D. Mol reminded the Commission that the matter before them is limited to the rezoning request only, as the Interim Use Permit (IUP) will be addressed by the Township. The Commission was advised to evaluate the request as a rezoning action with county-wide implications.
- E. Mahlberg stated that he believes the Commission's role is to build a record for the County Board, which will make the final decision. He noted that the property is currently zoned AG and designated in the plan to remain AG, which requires justification based on the property being "rare and unique." He asked the applicant what makes this property rare and unique to justify a departure from the plan. Clark responded that conditions have changed, making the property rare in the sense that, since the 2011 map demonstrated the demand for low impact shoreland there has been a push over the past three years from the DNR, deed commissioners, and the Governor of Minnesota to encourage public outdoor access and activity. She noted that the most significant changes have occurred within the last five years, making it critical to move forward. Clark also stated that there are small resorts throughout Wright County, including ten in her area, and she is requesting to be added to that group. Clark explained that the property is listed as AG 40 but has not been farmed for decades. When she purchased the two separate parcels, one was already divided as a homestead portion and will remain committed to maintaining the 35 acres as agricultural land, while the 4.5 acres are designated for recreational purposes. Clark stated that the unique circumstance is their knowledge of shoreline activity and ability to ensure public access, noting that not everyone has the equipment to visit parks, making rental access a key part of their request. Mahlberg acknowledged that increased outdoor access over the past five years is reasonable but questioned what makes this 4.5-acre property different from other county properties with larger lakeshore lots. Clark responded that most lakeshore properties are divided into 150-foot lots or smaller, whereas their 4.5 acres has approximately 500 lineal feet of shoreline, as well as walking trails and additional shoreline activities. She noted that this is substantially larger than most nearby residential areas, which contributes to the property's uniqueness. Mahlberg questioned the displayed Beacon aerial and asked about adjacent parcels, noting that they appeared capable of supporting a similar proposal. Clark stated that the property owner to the west is pursuing a different use and not the same request. Mahlberg expressed difficulty distinguishing this property as "rare and unique," since neighboring parcels appear similar and could theoretically make a similar request. Clark responded that the four zoning questions she addressed demonstrate that their request is consistent with county policies and the comprehensive plan. She stated that the shoreland reclassification to S-3 implements policies for water-oriented commercial recreation, which she considers the rare and unique aspect. She noted that the site already has a lodge and a caretaker home. The neighboring properties differ in that one does not have a home eligibility, and the other only allows one home, whereas the applicant already has additional lodging on site. She added that they plan to build a home on the adjacent 35 acres, further emphasizing that the existing lodging contributes to the property being rare and unique.
- F. Borrell stated that he feels there should be more recreational and S-3 properties in the County. He noted that, in northern Minnesota, people are generally more accepting of such developments because they are a source of income, whereas in Wright County, the concept is less widely recognized. Borrell expressed concerns regarding the road, noting that increased traffic could result in more dust. He stated that he could go either way on the request, acknowledging the need for these types of properties while also recognizing public concerns. Clark responded that there has been some misinformation regarding the intent of the proposal. She clarified that their intent is for small gatherings, such as corporate events, and that large wedding-type events have been removed from the plan. She noted that the applicant has heard concerns regarding parking and road use and believes that the traffic impact will be minimal. An agreement has already been reached with Stockholm Township regarding dust control. The Township also requested that a second access point off Rhodes Avenue, a paved road, be considered when building the home. Borrell stated that if he were a neighbor to the north, he would share similar concerns regarding traffic and dust. He asked whether 64th Street could be eliminated as an access point, as it would alleviate neighbors' concerns. He noted that the Commission cannot make that a condition and that it would need to be addressed by Stockholm Township through the IUP process. Clark responded that Stockholm Township has made it clear that driveway, parking, and roadway issues will need to be addressed, and she has been in close communication with them. She added that, as

needed, traffic could use the new driveway. Clark reminded the Commission that they do not anticipate large gatherings but rather smaller corporate events and that parking has been proposed for 52 vehicles. Borrell acknowledged this but noted that any vehicle traveling on a gravel road produces dust, which remains a concern.

- G. Felger asked for clarification regarding the staff report, noting that under paragraph (C), it states that Stockholm Township submitted materials, including a letter recommending approval of the rezoning. He asked whether the approval came from the Township Supervisors. Rhineberger stated that staff provided what was submitted by the Township and that he would assume the letter was from the Township Board. Felger explained that he was trying to understand the structure of the Township and whether they have a separate Planning & Zoning Board that makes recommendations to the Township Board. Member Mol stated that, based on the information he reviewed, the Advisory Board sent their recommendation to the Township Board with a 3–2 vote, and the Township Board also approved the request with a 3–2 vote. Rhineberger confirmed this information. Felger further questioned how Stockholm Township’s zoning authority applies in this situation, specifically regarding the change to the county zoning map. Rhineberger explained that the Township has zoning authority, but it does not have the authority to change the official county zoning map; only the County Board can make such changes.
- H. Mol questioned what the Land Use Plan (LUP) designates for this property and whether it is planned for commercial use. Rhineberger displayed the LUP and noted that the property is designated in the plan to remain AG. Borrell felt that any S-3 request would therefore be a request to rezone from AG. Rhineberger added that the LUP does not include a separate commercial shoreland district on the land use map.
- I. Public comment.
- Nancy Elmquist stated that she and her family live directly across from the proposed property and expressed concern about increased traffic on the gravel road. She noted that a driveway off of Rhodes Avenue could be acceptable. She explained that they have lived in a quiet area for many years and expressed doubt that the property is an appropriate location for commercial zoning. She stated that neighbors and other residents of Collinwood Lake are strongly opposed to the rezoning.
- J. Mol noted that the current request pertains only to rezoning and is not related to the Interim Use Permit (IUP). He explained that Stockholm Township has authority over the IUP, so issues such as driveway location are matters between the Township and the residents. The County’s authority is limited to the rezoning decision, which must be made considering the County as a whole, not just Stockholm Township or Collinwood Lake. Mol emphasized that the Commission has a duty to evaluate all lakes and properties in Wright County individually, recognizing that each situation may be unique. He noted that rezoning requests that are not consistent with the Land Use Plan (LUP) are particularly difficult to decide because they can affect both local and Countywide considerations.
- K. Borrell questioned the applicant regarding the use of their personal driveway for this operation and what level of commitment would be required. Mol reiterated that the driveway cannot be controlled through this request, as this discussion relates only to rezoning and not to the IUP. He noted that this is a unique situation because the IUP is not under the Commission’s control and reminded the Commission that the discussion is strictly related to rezoning. Rhineberger noted that technically, if the access route changes, the zoning of that portion of the access will need to change as well. He explained that at the last meeting, parking was questioned for this very reason, and it was noted that parking cannot occur outside of the S-3 district. This means the AG-zoned field cannot be used for overflow parking or for any use associated with the IUP and S-3 zoning. If the applicant wished to change the access, they would be required to return to the Commission to request that the area be rezoned to S-3. He reiterated that rezoning is very specific to a legal description and intended use. Borrell felt that if the applicant were to reconsider the access and return with a revised access plan, it would potentially reduce some resistance from residents. Clark stated that if the issue were solely road access, she would agree; however, there have been many accusations suggesting concerns beyond road access. She believes they have a solid proposal and plan and appreciates the option of having a second

access road. She also noted that Stockholm Township indicated the home's access would need to be off Rhodes Ave. Borrell reiterated his belief that the commercial access should be adjusted.

- L. Holland confirmed that if vehicles are parked outside of the 4.5 acres, the site would be out of compliance and asked who would be responsible for enforcement. Rhineberger stated that enforcement would be handled by Stockholm Township. Holland expressed concern that the area being rezoned is very small and unsure that there is adequate room for parking and overall use.
- M. Mol stated that rezoning applies countywide and therefore needs to be rare and unique within the County. He noted that he is from the northern area of the County and is aware of a property on Sugar Lake with 900 lineal feet of lakeshore, as well as other lakes with similar amounts of lakeshore. He believes there are many lakes within Wright County that have several hundred feet of lakeshore. It was noted that there is no commercial lakeshore within the LUP. Mol added that the County is growing, and the Commission must consider what that growth looks like in the future. He emphasized that while the applicant would like to use their property as they see fit, there are ordinances and laws that must be followed. He concluded that the Commission needs to be fair and consistent with everyone.
- N. Borrell asked whether, if the vote were negative, if the applicant could return with a new request. Rhineberger explained that the Commission is only providing a recommendation to the County Board. If the County Board were to deny the rezoning, there would be a one-year waiting period before the applicant could reapply, unless a significant change was made. What constitutes a significant change is not clearly defined and would be determined by the Zoning Administrator. Borrell stated that without a change to the driveway, he is opposed to the request. He acknowledged that the property may not be the most unique lakeshore property; however, in his view, having more than 50–100 feet of lakeshore meets the definition sufficiently, and he believes the County needs more recreational facilities. Borrell reiterated that without a change to the driveway, his vote would be no. Mol acknowledged Borrell's comments and reiterated that the driveway issue is not within the scope of this Commission's review.
- O. Felger addressed item (B) of the staff report and questioned the statement indicating that Stockholm Township has zoning authority over the property. Rhineberger explained that the Township applies zoning standards, which include the issuance of conditional use permits, IUPs, variances, and the administration of the zoning ordinance. The exception is a change to the official zoning map. Any change in the zoning map is determined by the County Board, with recommendation from the Planning Commission. Rhineberger further explained that if the property were rezoned but the Township were to deny the IUP, the property would remain zoned S-3 unless a request was made to rezone it back to AG. Felger noted that both the Township Planning and Zoning Commission and the Township Board approved the request, though not unanimously. He added that if Stockholm Township can control elements of the proposal, which could include a new driveway, he would be inclined to support the request.
- P. Borrell confirmed that if the driveway location were to change, the applicant would need to return to the Commission to request rezoning of a new area. Rhineberger confirmed this and further explained that if a house were built on the 30-acre parcel, it would be up to the Township to determine the driveway location. However, if the driveway were related to the commercial use, several changes would be required, including rezoning and a division of the property, as easements are not permitted. He noted that approval of the rezoning does not necessarily mean that Stockholm Township would oppose the access as currently proposed.
- Q. Mol reminded the Commission that while he supports local authority, in this situation the Commission must consider the impact on the entire County, not just Stockholm Township.
- R. Holland stated that her concern is that if this property is deemed unique and the zoning map is changed to S-3, another property along the same lake could submit a similar request, raising concerns about what that would mean for the lake and for precedent. She noted that just because a property abuts a lake does not make it unique. Mol stated that the

Commission needs to evaluate each location based on its own unique circumstances, but he agreed that it is possible another property along the lake could request rezoning to S-3. He reiterated that while each request must be reviewed individually, the Commission must also consider, at the county level, how resort development will be handled overall.

- S. Felger noted that the Township vote was 3–2 and that tonight’s Commission is not currently at full membership. He recalled past situations when items were tabled due to an incomplete Commission and questioned whether it would be appropriate to table this item until a full Commission is present. Rhineberger noted that there are time limits that must be considered, and there is no guarantee that all seven members will be present at future meetings. He stated that a quorum is present tonight, which is sufficient for a vote. Based on state statutes and regulatory deadlines, he would not recommend continuing the item solely to wait for a full Commission. Holland asked whether it would be appropriate to wait until the LUP is addressed.
- T. Mahlberg stated that having a fuller Commission present is a valid consideration. He noted that the presence of Commissioner Bravinder would be particularly helpful because part of what the applicant is presenting as “rare and unique” relates to changes that have occurred and are ahead of the LUP. He emphasized that the Commission is discouraged from making decisions solely based on the LUP being outdated and is instead expected to make land use decisions guided by the LUP, as outlined in Section 4.4 of the Plan. Mahlberg stated he feels that the decision would benefit from having Commissioner Bravinder present for discussion. However, it is unknown whether that Commissioner will attend the next meeting. While it is valid to try to have a full Commission and ensure all voices are present, he expressed uncertainty about whether it warrants signing a timeline waiver. He feels this decision is beyond the scope of this Commission and because of how it relates to the interpretation of the LUP it is a decision better suited for the County Commissioners, who can consider the factors and review the Plan. Continuing to debate the issue at this level would not strengthen the record.
- U. Holland agreed with member Mahlberg, stating that this matter might be better decided by the County Commissioners. She noted that the LUP is planned to be addressed next year and appreciated Commissioner Moynagh from District 5 being present to hear the discussion. Holland said that the County Board is better suited for a major decision like this and stated she is more comfortable forwarding the matter to the County Board for their determination. Mol stated that he would like to hear a motion with a recommendation for the County Board, as they have the authority to accept or reject the Commission’s recommendation. Felger confirmed that the County Board would make the final decision regardless of the Commission’s recommendation. Mol added that the County Board would receive the same materials, discussion notes, and minutes that were provided to this Commission. With the LUP potentially being updated next year, the County Board can consider the future context in relation to this request. Mol reiterated that he would like a motion for or against, including findings, with a continuation to next month.
- V. Mahlberg moved to close the public hearing to all oral and written comments, and continue the matter to the January 15, 2026, Planning Commission meeting for counsel and staff to prepare findings consistent with a recommendation for denial of the request. Motion seconded by Holland.

DISCUSSION: Felger clarified that the Commission can forward a recommendation to the County Board, but the County Board may choose to act contrary to that recommendation. Rhineberger confirmed this and reviewed the process, noting that the County Board makes the final decision. He added that the County Board meeting is not open to public comment and consists solely of deliberation among County Board members.

VOTE: Holland, Borrell, Mol & Mahlberg NAY: Felger

MOTION CARRIED

5. **MBE, INC.** – Cont. 11/20

LOCATION: xxxx State Hwy. 25 N & 50th Street NE– Part of SW ¼ of SW ¼, Section 4, Township 120, Range 25, Wright County, MN. (Buffalo Twp.) Tax #202-000-043206 Owner: MBE Inc.

An Interim Use Permit to mine sand and gravel for approximately 10.7 acres and up to 348,300 yards, to include excavation, screening, washing, crushing of materials, stockpiling and processing of recycled materials, and fill for reclamation, to be used for fill and base material for public and private construction projects in the area, as regulated in Section 155.031, 155.048 & 155.100 of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Bob Perry and Steve Stadler with MBE Inc.

- A. Rhineberger reminded the Commission that this matter was continued from the previous meeting. Comments recommending both approval and denial were received and are included in the staff report. Rhineberger added that the item was continued to allow the County Board to consider a petition for a new Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). At its December 16 meeting, the County Board adopted a resolution determining that a new EAW was not required.
- B. Perry noted that an application originally appeared before the Commission in 2021, after which COVID and the moratorium occurred. In 2024 a new application was submitted, the request was denied, and they are now back before the Commission with significant changes to their plan. Perry explained that much of the concern in 2024 centered on safety at the intersection of Highway 25 and County Road 113. He stated that, with the expected roadway upgrades and the planned installation of a roundabout, there will be sufficient improvements to safety in the area to warrant returning to the Commission. Perry also noted a change in the proposed location where excavation for the pit would begin. This change is related to access requirements requested by Wright County and MnDOT, shifting the access point closer to the west, whereas it had previously been located more toward the east on the property. In the interest of time, Perry suggested that members of the public speak and voice their concerns so he could address them collectively. Mol agreed. Perry then asked whether a full Commission could be requested. Mol noted that both members had planned to be in attendance; however, due to unforeseen medical issues, they were unable to attend.
- C. Mol addressed the public and requested that comments be limited to three to four minutes. He noted that the Commission had received approximately 200 pages of letters for review and asked that public comments focus on new or substantive information, or on points speakers wished to reiterate.
- D. Public comment.
 - Ralph Varner – Lifelong Buffalo resident and farmer. He stated that gravel is necessary with growth and that everyone wants good roads. He noted that the county is fortunate to have one of the richest gravel deposits. Varner commented that if gravel resources are not utilized and homes are built over them, there may come a time when those homes are removed to access the gravel. He stated that the corridor from Buffalo to Monticello has been mined for approximately 75 years, with smaller operations occurring even earlier, and that the entire area sits on gravel. He reiterated the need to continue mining.
 - Don Krause, Buffalo Lake Partners and co-developer of Pulaski Shores (Buffalo), stated that on Monday evening, December 15, the Buffalo City Council approved the preliminary plat for approximately 850 new homes, located roughly one mile from the subject site. He noted the project is anticipated to begin around April 1, with housing affordability being a key concern. Krause stated the development will require a significant supply of aggregate and that proximity of materials helps control costs over the estimated 5 to 8-year buildout period. Krause indicated that a complete study of the area was carried out and will be available on the City's website or could be provided upon request. He noted that there is substantial development activity occurring in Buffalo. Mahlberg confirmed that the Pulaski Shores development is planned for the south side of Lake Pulaski and questioned the truck traffic route. Krause responded that a traffic study and a

full Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) were completed and that the site meets balancing requirements; however, the development does not have an on-site source of sand and gravel. He stated he was not aware of specific aggregate supply locations in the area but noted that costs increase the farther materials must be hauled. Mahlberg asked about the intended travel route if the MBE pit were to be open and used as a material source. Krause stated that routing would be determined by the dirt contractor and that he was speaking as the developer. Mahlberg then asked about the estimated volume of sand and gravel required. Krause responded that while he did not know the exact quantities, he estimated approximately \$20–25 million in streets and utilities costs, which would include asphalt, aggregate, sand, and gravel.

- Richard Brown, a resident on 50th Street, stated that he has appeared before the Commission three times regarding this matter. He expressed his belief that County Road 113 would serve as a haul route for the Pulaski Shores development, with Mahlberg agreeing that traffic could travel in one of two directions. Brown stated that his first concern is that the proposal does not align with the Land Use Plan or the surrounding residential neighborhood. His second concern relates to activities identified in MBE's plan, including gravel washing and crushing, equipment washing, and road watering for dust control. He noted that the proposed water source is a well at an adjacent residence and stated his belief that a residential well would be insufficient to support the operational demands of a gravel pit. He expressed similar concerns regarding the use of electricity from the adjacent home. Brown's final point addressed farming risks. He stated that farming is inherently risky and that, if the permit is granted, he would hope neighboring landowners, farmers, and orchard owners would be indemnified from what he described as 100 percent manmade risks introduced by the gravel pit operation. He noted that the farms and orchards existed long before the gravel pit was proposed and stated that they should not be required to assume additional risks beyond natural conditions.
- Chris Taylor, from Buffalo, stated that a number of research papers specifically address the impacts of gravel pit dust on farmers and orchards. He noted that when these issues were raised last year, the response was that growers should clean the apples, which he stated would require greater effort and expense. Taylor reiterated comments he made at a prior meeting regarding activities and services held at the church located directly across the road from the proposed pit. He stated that during pit operating hours, the church hosts activities such as choir practice, children's programs during the school year, and daytime Vacation Bible School during the summer, which he noted would coincide with peak gravel hauling and operation periods. Taylor listed several additional gatherings held at the church and noted that the church has agreements with local schools in which children arrive by bus for various events. He also stated that nonprofit organizations host events, training, and activities at the church throughout the day. His concern is the volume of traffic entering and exiting the church at an unprotected intersection while gravel pit truck traffic would also be present.
- Michael Luedemann, a resident of 50th Street NE, stated that he also spoke at the prior meeting regarding dust control and traffic. He noted that the proposed roundabout adds a new element to the discussion but wanted to touch on dust first. He expressed concern that once topsoil is removed, exposed soil would be subject to wind, resulting in dust impacts. He stated that his concern is for nearby orchards, neighbors, and the church having to deal with dust during times when no one is present at the site to apply water for dust control. Luedemann stated that he is not opposed to gravel pits in general but does not believe this location is appropriate. He further noted that with the roundabout, fully loaded trucks would take longer to accelerate, which he believes could cause traffic backups. He expressed concern that eastbound and westbound traffic may have difficulty entering the roundabout. He reiterated that both the roundabout and dust control, particularly during unattended periods, remain significant concerns.
- Carl Carlson, Buffalo Township Supervisor, reiterated that the Township denied the request, not because it is opposed to gravel pits, but because the roundabout would not be open and functioning prior to the gravel pit beginning operations. He stated that if MBE does not receive the Highway 25 construction project, all pit traffic would use County Road 113, which is a significant concern. He noted recent issues with Knife River trucks using County Road 113. Carlson stated that the Township recommended reevaluating the proposal and conducting a traffic study six months after the roundabout is constructed. He emphasized that the Township is

not opposed to the gravel pit itself, but believes additional review is needed, including completion of the roundabout prior to pit operations and a new traffic study once the roundabout is operational. Mol noted that the Land Use Plan (LUP), per Township direction, designates the parcel as Commercial, which Carlson agreed with. Mol stated that during the previous request, safety concerns were raised and that a roundabout was identified as a solution to address traffic safety. Mol added that hypothetically, if the property were zoned Commercial and developed with another commercial use, it could generate significant traffic seven days a week, even if it were not semi-truck traffic. Carlson again stated that the Township is not against the gravel pit, but that opening the pit prior to completion of the roundabout is the primary concern. He said the Board's opinion is to reevaluate after the roundabout is installed, which would be the Township's position for any operation on the property due to amount of traffic and number of accidents at the intersection. He also noted that the original traffic study was completed during COVID, when traffic volumes were significantly reduced and school was not in session. Mol stated that the Commission must rely on the State and County to ensure road safety, noting that the roads are public, not private. He referenced testimony earlier in the meeting regarding the City of Buffalo's approval of approximately 800 homes, which will add traffic to the area. Mol stated that gravel trucks will use County Road 113 regardless of which pit they originate from and expressed difficulty understanding traffic as a sole reason for denial, given that it is a public road and the State is actively working to improve the intersection. He noted that rezoning the property to Commercial could allow a different high-traffic business and that a traffic study conducted in six months would likely show increased traffic regardless. Mol stated that public roads are open to cars, motorcycles, and semi-trucks alike. Carlson stated that the Township's concern is keeping trucks off Dague and Eaken (Township roads) when they are not permitted to travel on Highway 25 and preventing use of roads that are not designed to handle heavy truck traffic. Rhineberger stated that if the request is approved, the Commission would be tasked with addressing these concerns through conditions of approval. He explained that conditions could include designated haul routes, prohibitions on certain roads or directions, or requirements that pit activity not commence until an approved MnDOT contract is in place or until road improvements are completed. He explained that legally, conditions that are directly related and proportional to the approval can be imposed. Carlson stated that at the Township level, there was a significant discrepancy regarding the estimated number of trucks and concern that the operation would continually seek extensions. He stated that neighbors want clarity on whether the pit would operate for five years, ten years, or fifty years. While acknowledging that gravel is a valuable resource, he stated residents want more information on operational details, including crushing hours. He also reiterated concerns regarding protection of the apple orchards, noting that dust could impact production. Mol noted that Commissioner Bravinder was not present, and as a Cokato Township Supervisor, he may have additional insight on road concerns, but from what he has heard member Bravinder state in previous meetings is that roads can be posted with weight limits. He went on to share a personal experience where truck traffic on a township road was quickly addressed through enforcement. He advised that if the Township does not want trucks using certain roads, five-ton weight limits should be posted and enforced. Carlson questioned how enforcement would occur if the Township cannot issue tickets. Mol reiterated that the Township is the road authority and that calls regarding violations should be responded to. Borrell confirmed he has had similar experience with enforcement on a township road. Carlson concluded by reiterating that the Township is not opposed to gravel pits and recognizes gravel as a valuable resource but stated that it is unfair to neighboring properties to move forward without a defined timeline for how long the pit would be operational.

- Lesley Walz stated that her primary concern is not road safety but the impact on orchards and nearby residents. She noted that while business concerns are frequently discussed, the effects on families living within one mile of the site are less addressed. Walz expressed concern about potential hazards, including the formation of nanoparticles during gravel pit operations, which she stated are not fully mitigated by dust suppression and can remain in the lungs, posing risks to children and individuals with preexisting respiratory conditions. She noted that the area is already surrounded by gravel pits and that dust can travel miles. Walz stated that the particles are often invisible and emphasized that the needs of local residents should not be ignored. She stated that the residents purchased homes consistent with the Land Use Plan, and that changes to accommodate business operations should not come at the expense of the community. She concluded that the focus should remain on protecting the people living in the area.

- Lori Cassidy, who lives on 50th Street just down from the proposed site, has lived there for over 30 years. She pointed out that when the moratorium occurred, criteria were established that should be fulfilled. She feels that the land use, as presented in this application, does not conform with the NE Quadrant Plan of Wright County. The Land Use Plan (LUP) has not changed, and the property is still labeled as commercial. She feels that the Interim Use Permit (IUP) will be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other properties in the immediate vicinity and could undermine activities that occur at neighboring properties. Cassidy believes that approving the IUP will impede the normal, orderly development of the area because, as she understands it, when gravel is mined, only particular items can be returned to the lot. She does not believe commercial development would be allowed if the gravel is removed. She noted that there is no set timeline, which is confusing. She believes IUPs are supposed to be for five years, but what they have heard is ten years or that this is just the start. She wonders if extensions will happen and whether the operation could continue for 30–40 years and at that time, how will a gravel pit would fit within the LUP if the area is later designated more residential. Her understanding is that the area up to County Road 113 is planned to be residential. She also noted that the initial removal of product is a separate IUP from the washing, crushing, and recycling, as those would require a separate IUP application. Safety is another concern, as it relates to MnDOT as well. She feels that assuming a roundabout will be installed and will automatically address traffic issues is premature; it would be better to install the roundabout and assess its effectiveness after some use. Cassidy emphasized that she is not against anyone doing anything, but she does have concerns about the vagueness of the responses and the assumptions that “this will just happen.” She feels that if MBE wants this project, the application should have detailed how they will be a good neighbor. Many people will be impacted and affected, and she is not sure why as residents have to prove themselves, rather than the applicant being the one to prove themselves.

Chairman Mol called a break at 8:28 p.m. The meeting was called back to order at 8:38 p.m.

- Tammy Garvin, 50th Street NE and Gilchrist Orchard, noted that, although it has been suggested there has been a significant change since last year’s denial, she sees little difference, and in some respects the applicant’s request is more incomplete and vague. Garvin stated that the applicant’s desire to bid on a project is not a valid reason to bring the IUP back before the Commission. She noted that no work has been done on the roundabout and that she has not observed any significant changes. Garvin referenced the number of trucks on the roads, which Township representatives indicated could be 2,880 potential trucks. She expressed concern about safety along County 113, noting the lack of shoulders, deep ditches, and the limited space for pedestrians and bicyclists. She emphasized that the road is dangerous and that residents have the right to safely walk, run, or bike. She further noted that trucks and industrial machinery generate noise and emissions that contribute to poor air quality and climate change. Garvin cited the MN Department of Health 2012 Impact and Climate Change EAW study, highlighting that projects such as gravel pits may cause public nuisances, health impacts, and conflicts with residential land use. She expressed concern about property values, referencing several studies in the U.S. showing a statistically significant adverse effect of gravel pits on nearby home values. She also noted a study on the effects of gravel mine dust on apple production, which was included in the information provided to the Commission. Garvin stated that the proposed IUP does not conform with the NE Quadrant of the LUP from 2007, noting that the corner in question is not included in the aggregate map outlined in the Plan. She emphasized that surrounding land is Rural Residential, with approximately 1,500 people who would be affected by pit operations day-to-day for years. Garvin also noted that Gilchrist Orchard and Flower Farm, as well as Woods Edge Orchard, are smaller orchards that focus on beauty, peace, and tranquility rather than large events. She stated that a gravel mine in the community would be incompatible with the character of the area.
- Tracy Bebeau lives approximately 600 feet from the proposed location. She addressed the LUP and noted that Policy One states the principal long-term use of land in this area will remain rural in nature for the foreseeable future. The policy further states that land uses requiring service levels greater than those needed for rural

agriculture should not be allowed. She questioned the need for an additional pit when there are already more than five open pits in the area. She explained that the LUP states that, if necessary, revisions and amendments should be made to ensure the plan continues to work as the Northeast Quadrant evolves and changes. Elsewhere, the plan notes that changes should only be made to address the needs of the entire community, as no plan should be altered to suit the needs of a single proposed project or special interest. Bebeau noted that the applicant has stated an intent to apply for the roundabout and Highway 25 project, which she feels is very specific to one individual. She pointed out that in February 2019, a 33-acre split was approved directly north of the proposed IUP location. The meeting minutes indicated that the Commission felt the land met the criteria outlined in the LUP for rezoning from Agricultural (AG) to Agricultural Residential (AR). The minutes also include testimony from the seller stating they attempted to sell the property as an aggregate resource, but two potential buyers conducted soil borings with poor results and subsequently withdrew. Planning and Zoning voted unanimously to approve the rezoning and split, thereby setting a precedent for residential use. Bebeau questioned what constitutes “injurious to the use and enjoyment” and referenced the definition of “injurious” as a nuisance where a person’s use of their land is significantly disrupted by another’s use, including excessive noise, odors, vibrations, or pollution. She then read Minnesota Statute Section 561.01, which defines a nuisance as anything injurious to health, indecent or offensive to the senses, or an obstruction to the free use of property that interferes with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property. She stated that 432 to 2,800 loads, six days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., would directly affect those living in the area. As a real estate professional, she noted that sellers are legally obligated to disclose all material facts that could adversely affect the use and enjoyment of a property. She reiterated that the operation would have an adverse effect on neighboring properties, including financial impacts. She also requested that well water be analyzed and that additional information be required, as the proposal includes drawing water from an existing residential well and identifies four to five well locations on the proposed map. She emphasized that everyone in the area, and throughout Buffalo Township, relies on private wells. She asked that strict conditions be imposed if the proposal were to be approved. Bebeau stated that the attendance at the meeting demonstrates the community’s awareness of the potential side effects this project could have on the Northeast Quadrant. She questioned whether, if approved, the county could competently state that the IUP would not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties and would not impede the normal development and use of the area, which is residential in nature.

- Jeff Byington lives approximately two miles from the proposed site. He noted that a request for a new Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was submitted and that the County Board denied the request. Byington stated that the denial of the new EAW was a significant disappointment. As mentioned in prior comments, the most recent EAW was completed five years ago during the COVID period. He believes the data used was inaccurate because traffic volumes were reduced, the Government Center was not open, and school was not in session at that time. He finds it perplexing that no effort has been made to obtain updated statistical data and that information from five years ago is considered sufficient. He noted that the new MBE application includes additional changes and stated that several questions raised as far back as two years ago remain unanswered, with responses he considers vague. With no reply from MBE on truck traffic, the residents independently calculated truck traffic and estimated approximately 2,080 truck trips per week through the intersection. Byington reminded the Commission that the previous application was denied for several reasons, with traffic being a primary concern. Another key concern was that the applicant failed to demonstrate that the intent of the Northeast Quadrant LUP would not be compromised. He stated that the community strongly believes there are no conditions that could sufficiently mitigate the damage this project would cause. He stated that the community would like the opportunity to submit proposed conditions for consideration and that they had developed 21 conditions they wished to propose. He asked whether conditions could still be submitted after the public comment period closed. Mr. Rhineberger responded that all conditions must be submitted prior to the close of public comment. Byington then read several of the proposed conditions aloud, which were provided to Mr. Rhineberger and entered into the record. The first condition stated that MBE shall not begin construction of the gravel pit until it secures the bid for the roundabout at Highway 113 and Highway 25. The second condition stated that if MBE fails to secure the bid, construction of the gravel pit shall not begin until the roundabout has been completed. The third condition he read specified that mining and material processing operations shall occur only Monday through Friday from

7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with no exceptions, including no weekends or holidays. Due to high traffic volumes during school commute times, truck traffic would be restricted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on operating days. The full set of proposed conditions was provided to Mr. Rhineberger for inclusion in the record.

Byington concluded his comments by stating that he is opposed to this gravel pit. While acknowledging that gravel is needed and expressing appreciation for the applicant's efforts to serve customers, he stated his belief that an alternative location, such as a site farther away, like near St. Cloud should be considered instead.

- Steve Garvin stated that many of his thoughts had already been expressed but wanted to reiterate several key points. He noted that approximately one year ago, the proposal was denied primarily based on the Land Use Plan (LUP), with the roundabout being a significant consideration. He emphasized that the LUP remains the governing document guiding how the county moves forward. This proposal is not a short-term, five-year plan, but rather a long-term or "lifetime" plan that could continue for many years. Garvin referenced comments previously made by Commissioners Mol, Mahlberg, and Felger, noting that one of the primary concerns was that the proposal would be injurious to the neighborhood and surrounding residents. He stated that the nearby church would likely be more significantly impacted than the apple orchards due to the many programs held throughout the week for community members and schoolchildren. He pointed out that there are no sidewalks along these roads, making the estimated 2,800 truck trips per week, figures provided by MBE in their narrative, an excessive and serious safety concern, in addition to the LUP-related issues. Garvin questioned the purpose of having a plan if exceptions are routinely made. He noted that, according to the LUP, the property is designated as Commercial, while MBE's operation is industrial in nature. He also referenced the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) petitions, stating that the original petition included over 200 signatures and the most recent petition included 134 signatures, many of which expressed concerns about impacts to the church and surrounding neighborhood. He clarified that he is not opposed to gravel mining in general but is opposed to this specific location. He noted that it has been stated that once the initial five-year period is complete, a new application would be submitted, and with the 60 acres owned by the applicant, the pit could potentially operate for more than 30 years. Garvin asked the Commission to carefully consider the request. Commissioner Mahlberg confirmed that Garvin is associated with Garvin Farms. Mahlberg then referenced a letter from Dorsey, which stated that the current proposal is worse than the one the Commission denied less than two years ago, and asked how the proposal is objectively worse given its smaller footprint. Garvin responded that the original proposal covered 36 acres, the subsequent proposal was reduced to 7 acres, and the current request is for 10 acres, which is larger than the second proposal. He noted that the berms in the original proposal were higher, whereas the current proposal includes berms of only four feet, which he believes are insufficient. He also stated that a new home is being constructed on an adjacent property and that the Planning Commission has been working strategically to follow the LUP. He noted that Garvin Farms was granted an Ag Tourism permit for its apple orchard, an activity he feels is incompatible with approximately 2,800 truck trips per week. He stated that approval of the current request would be inconsistent with the Commission's own plan and would further erode its intent. He also noted that the proposed driveway entrance is now located directly across from the church. Garvin stated that there is no suitable location for the truck entrance and expressed concern that trucks lining up near the entrance would impact and clog the roundabout. He described the truck volume as excessive for that intersection and stated that the character of the Northeast Quadrant under the LUP would be altered for years to come. He added that a commercial development, such as a Casey's or Walmart, would be a more appropriate use than a gravel pit generating thousands of truck trips through the neighborhood. Commissioner Mahlberg stated that the roundabout project will occur and will involve a significant amount of dirt movement, questioning whether this location is logical for sourcing material. He asked whether, assuming the mine would be completed at the end of the project, this location would be preferable to trucks and minimal travel distance. Garvin responded that there are existing pits approximately half a mile up the road. Mahlberg noted that there is no guarantee those pits would secure the bid. Garvin reiterated that he believes the location is unsuitable for several reasons, stating first that it serves as a primary introduction to Buffalo from Monticello and that the presence of gravel pits creates a poor first impression. Mahlberg noted that the area would already be significantly impacted during roundabout construction and questioned why the immediately adjacent site would not be ideal for resource extraction. Garvin responded that the pit would be injurious to neighboring properties because, once the road project is completed, the pit could remain operational for an additional 10 years or more. Mahlberg clarified that his

hypothetical assumed the mining operation would conclude once the road project was completed. Garvin referenced a gravel pit in the City of St. Michael that operated for approximately two years and was then reclaimed into a commercial site. He stated that if a similar timeline were proposed in this case, it might be acceptable; however, an operation lasting 10, 15, or 20 years remains a significant concern.

- E. Perry stated that the estimate of 2,800 truck trips per week is inaccurate, noting that if that volume were correct, the project would be completed in approximately 10 weeks, which he stated is not realistic. He summarized the concerns he heard during public comment as relating primarily to apple orchards, the Land Use Plan (LUP), dust, traffic control, and traffic on 50th Street. Perry addressed comments regarding truck acceleration when leaving the roundabout, stating that trucks naturally slow as they approach a roundabout and accelerate as they exit, which is the intended function of a roundabout. He explained that the concept of the roundabout originated from a meeting held after the 2024 denial, which included MnDOT and Wright County representatives. At that meeting, MnDOT reviewed traffic counts for Highway 25 and determined that there was insufficient traffic volume or accident history to warrant changes at the intersection. MnDOT indicated it would not make improvements to the intersection. Perry stated that further discussion at the meeting focused on what would be required to install a roundabout. MnDOT indicated it would not install one, but Wright County expressed interest and support for a roundabout project. He noted that Wright County secured federal grant funding for the project, with Holland confirming that the County received a federal grant. Perry expressed confidence that the dust mitigation measures proposed in the IUP application will be effective. He also addressed concerns about the lack of road shoulders and sidewalks, noting that aggregate is required to build both shoulders and sidewalks. Perry responded to comments suggesting that they would not be a good neighbor, stating that several letters from residents living close to their existing operations were submitted and expressed appreciation for their operations. Perry added that a final design drawing for the roundabout is not yet available and noted a portion of their land would be incorporated into the roundabout itself. Addressing visual and noise concerns, Perry stated that the mining plan involves excavating below grade and operating within the pit, which he said would help contain both noise and dust. He confirmed that they have access to a well on a neighboring property to supplement water needs, if necessary, but noted that if additional water is required, they may need to install a new well or increase the capacity of an existing well. Stadler added that ponds could also be constructed to collect and retain water. Perry stated that their intent is to haul in a load of compactable material for every load of aggregate removed and that the plan includes the construction of a water-holding area. He reiterated that noise concerns would be mitigated by operating within the pit. Stadler added that backup alarms are the loudest and most disruptive source of noise but noted that technology exists to reduce sound travel distance. Commissioner Mol noted that mining operations differ from other types of operations and asked whether visual indicator lights could be used instead of backup alarms. Stadler responded that backup alarms are required under Mine Safety rules and that most pits utilize both alarms and lights. Perry added that they are required to comply with all Mine Safety rules and regulations. Stadler confirmed that the driveway location was changed but noted that it was moved at the direction of MnDOT and Wright County. He also addressed the truck count estimate, explaining that the 2,880-truck figure was based on theoretical full-hour operations and reiterated that the actual number of trucks would be significantly lower. He referenced the St. Michael site, noting that it was a specific, short-term project designed to reduce costs. Perry stated that truck traffic to the east would not be their preferred route unless there were projects in that direction where County Road 113 would ideally be the primary haul route. He acknowledged that many townships post weight restrictions on their roads and stated that they comply with those restrictions unless a project is located on a posted road, in which case they would coordinate with the township for permission. Perry stated that he believes much of the concern centers on the use of County Road 113 and noted that other contractors currently use that road and will not be restricted. Stadler addressed concerns about the duration of the operation, noting that an Interim Use Permit (IUP) typically has a 10-year term. He stated that if they do not comply with permit conditions or address issues adequately, the IUP may not be renewed, so technically there is an end date with all IUPs that is regulated by this Commission. He added that if work is completed in the proposed area and they wish to expand mining to another portion of the site, they would be required to return to the Commission for approval. Perry stated that the mining ordinance specifies allowable hours of operation and days per week, and that applicants typically request the full range allowed under the ordinance. Stadler added that MnDOT's website records show that between January 2017 and December 2025, there were 14 reportable accidents at the Highway 25 intersection. Of those, six occurred on weekends, six involved no injuries, four involved possible injuries, six occurred between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., and two occurred after 7:00 p.m. He reiterated that MnDOT concluded, based on its studies and records, that the intersection does not warrant a

roundabout. Finally, Perry addressed concerns related to organic apple production and dust. He referenced resources, included in their submission, indicating that University of Minnesota horticulture studies show organic apple growers sometimes apply clay dust to protect crops from insects when chemical treatments are not used. He stated that while dust has been raised as a concern, there is also evidence suggesting it may not be as detrimental as suggested, that is for the Commission to decide.

- F. Patrick B. Steinhoff, with Malkerson Gunn Martin LLP, attorney representing the applicant, stated he would address comments made that the proposal is inconsistent with the Land Use Plan (LUP). He noted that, in large part, time is limited because this is an Interim Use Permit (IUP). He felt most comments regarding the LUP referred to the Future Land Use Map, which designates the property as commercial. That map was adopted in July 2007, over 18 years ago, and since its adoption there has been no action to implement the plan with respect to this site, as the property remains zoned AG. In the AG zoning district, mining is allowed as an IUP. There is no reason granting an IUP with a 10-year term would prevent or preclude future commercial development. Steinhoff reiterated that his first point was that this is a time-limited IUP and therefore does not prevent the site from being developed consistent with the LUP map after the IUP term expires. His second point was that the map is not the entire plan. He referred to a section on aggregate mining, which encourages mines and aggregate production to be located as close to project sites as possible. The reasons cited include overall cost reduction and shorter truck travel distances, which are better for the environment and roadway safety. This mine is closer to many proposed projects and is adjacent to Highway 25 and approximately 800 proposed homes in Buffalo, making it consistent with the Land Use Plan. Steinhoff stated the LUP recommends that the County consider mining as an IUP so it can be time-limited, reclaimed, and converted to uses consistent with the LUP. As mentioned by MBE, their plan is to reclaim the site with consideration of future commercial development. He also addressed expiration issues, stating that if the permit expires and MBE applies for an extension, it would be up to the Commission to decide whether to grant it. The final issue Steinhoff addressed was a statement by the Dorsey Law Firm suggesting a 40-acre minimum lot size. He noted this was not accurate and stated that there is density language with which the applicant is compliant, along with other applicable performance standards. In summary, Steinhoff stated that the application is not inconsistent with the LUP, is term-limited, does not prevent future development, and is consistent with LUP policies related to gravel mining. Commissioner Mahlberg questioned Steinhoff regarding the 10-year time limit and asked whether the Commission could consider the likelihood, based on past experience, of how long pits remain open. Steinhoff responded that he did not know why they would consider that, noting the County Board recently adopted an ordinance establishing a 10-year mining IUP, which is relatively short compared to other counties that allow 25–30 years. He stated there is no track record under this ordinance, as it was adopted just last year, and that it would be speculative to predict how a future Planning Commission might act on an extension request. Mahlberg asked whether the Commission is legally allowed to look beyond the immediate term when considering general health, safety, and welfare, given that decisions may realistically have ripple effects. He stated that an existing pit seeking expansion is more likely to be approved than a new pit and asked whether this could be considered under the new IUP standards. Steinhoff replied that doing so would involve considering facts not in the record and would not provide a rational basis for the decision. Mahlberg referenced the 2024 findings, noting that the life of the pit was discussed and that once a pit is opened, it is more likely to remain open if market demand exists. Steinhoff agreed that this may be the case but emphasized that the Commission still retains the authority to decide. Mahlberg stated that although a future Commission is not bound, today's decision could have impacts beyond the 10-year term on surrounding landowners. Steinhoff disagreed, stating that such conclusions rely on assumptions about future extension applications and decisions that cannot be known. Mahlberg noted testimony indicating approval of approximately 850 new homes and strong demand for aggregate. He stated that, given this evidence, it is reasonable to expect future expansion requests. Steinhoff responded that future Commissions would still evaluate any application on its merits. Mahlberg agreed.
- G. Mahlberg questioned the total amount of aggregate proposed for removal, noting the narrative states 350,000 cubic yards and asked about the total available yardage on site. Steinhoff stated he did not know that figure and stepped aside. Mahlberg then asked about material needed for the Highway 25 project. Perry stated plans had not yet been released but estimated approximately 100,000 cubic yards for the entire project. Mahlberg stated that if the bid were won, roughly one-quarter to one-third of the site's material could be extracted in the first year. Perry confirmed but noted that other pits along the highway could also contribute material. Mahlberg asked about road closures and access points. Perry explained topographical constraints and uncertainties related to coordination with other contractors. He

stated that unknowns make it difficult to provide specific answers to the public without risking inaccurate information. Mahlberg addressed a proposed condition of delaying pit operations until completion of Highway 25 if bids are not secured. Stadler stated it would take approximately six months to open the pit even if the permit were granted immediately. Mahlberg clarified that he was exploring potential conditions regardless of practical challenges and asked the applicant whether their operation would be hindered if they were not awarded the bid or if they were not permitted to operate until the Highway 25 project was completed. Perry asked whether such a delay would reduce the operational timeline from 10 years to approximately 9.5 years. Rhineberger noted that the application narrative references a 5-year phase and does not explicitly request a 10-year permit; therefore, the Commission cannot grant a 10-year permit based on the current application. Mahlberg acknowledged differing references to operational timelines. Perry confirmed the initial 5-year phase and noted no guarantees. Perry stated the intent is to salvage aggregate, rebuild, and compact the site to make it “shovel-ready” for commercial development, which aligns with long-standing commercial guidance, which they hope will take roughly 10 years. He noted the property had displayed signage advertising aggregate availability for years and that surrounding pits make the presence of aggregate unsurprising. Mahlberg disagreed with the implication that neighbors should have expected the proposal and noted proximity concerns, particularly regarding the nearby church. Perry and Stadler addressed noise and traffic concerns, related to the church, noting weekday operations and minimal weekend activity. Mahlberg countered that the church has daily activity. Mahlberg stated he struggled to identify errors in the 2024 findings that would justify reversing his prior position, though traffic conditions have changed. Perry stated that traffic at the intersection was a safety concern and, to his recollection, the primary reason cited previously. Mahlberg responded that he did not recall a prioritization among the findings but agreed that traffic conditions at the intersection will change. Perry added that their long-term vision for the property is to align with the City of Buffalo’s Land Use Plan and anticipated annexation to 50th Street to allow for utilities and future commercial development. Stadler clarified that while MBE owns 60 acres, only 35 acres are proposed for mining due to zoning restrictions. Perry noted aggregate depletion rates in the area and stated this pit is smaller than nearby operations, making it more feasible to fully extract and transition to redevelopment.

- H. Borrell stated he would be disappointed if the aggregate resources were not removed prior to the land being converted to another use, noting that such resources are necessary to society in a manner like agricultural resources. He referenced comments made by former State Senator Steve Dille, emphasizing that many essential facilities, such as mines, manufacturing plants, refineries, and gravel operations must exist near where people live for society to function. He stated that if every project were stopped, it would negatively impact the economy, society, and the environment. Borrell added that some level of tolerance is necessary, citing examples of living near agricultural operations, solar fields, and differing expectations between urban and rural residents. He acknowledged there may be dust associated with gravel mining but stated that dust from local gravel roads is comparable, if not worse. Perry added that portions of the property will remain in agricultural use during operations and that reclaimed areas will be restored for agricultural use following mining activities.
- I. Felger confirmed that the primary objective of the applicant is to supply material for the proposed roundabout, then asked whether a condition prohibiting operation until six months after the roundabout was completed would negatively impact the project. Stadler responded that such a condition would prevent them from bidding on the project and would be detrimental to their business. Felger stated that gravel resources are needed and referenced comments regarding the depletion of aggregate in the rapidly growing area, particularly on the east side of the County. He noted that aggregate is essential for infrastructure such as highways, sidewalks, driveways, and building foundations, and that limiting access to these materials would have broader societal impacts. Felger referenced the St. Michael site, noting that material extraction occurred as part of the development process and was short-term in nature, serving as an example of temporary inconvenience for community benefit. He stated that some level of inconvenience is necessary for the greater good, while acknowledging that nearby residents have raised legitimate concerns that warrant careful consideration. Felger also addressed pedestrian safety concerns along County Road 113, stating that certain county roads are not designed for walking and expressed uncertainty about how those concerns could be mitigated. Based on his experience, Felger stated that MBE has been a responsible operator and neighbor. He noted that if the request were denied, other permitted agricultural uses could occur on the property, or future commercial development could take place, all of which would also require aggregate resources. He concluded that alternative uses could potentially result in equal or greater impacts.

- J. Holland stated that the site is a valuable resource, noting the importance of aggregate for county roads and infrastructure. She acknowledged that Wright County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the state, with extensive road construction planned in Albertville over the next year, including the Costco development. Holland emphasized the need to utilize available resources efficiently. She noted that the County Highway Engineer previously worked for MnDOT, which often sourced aggregate from Wright County or Dakota, so the County is very lucky to have these resources so close. Holland acknowledged the hardship to neighbors but highlighted that the State of Minnesota is considering a rule that could remove mining operations from Planning Commission oversight, limiting the ability to impose conditions to address local concerns. She stated that now is the opportunity to determine conditions that balance neighborhood concerns with operational needs. Holland indicated that traffic was a major concern with the prior request but noted that Highway 25 improvements make the gravel resource necessary. Holland stated that once the roundabout is completed, she doesn't see a traffic related reason why the pit couldn't continue operations for an additional 5–10 years.
- K. Felger stated that last year he voted no on the request, and the only reason he did so was due to concerns about the intersection, which he felt was very unsafe and that has changed with the introduction of the roundabout. Felger also noted concerns about dust throughout the year, specifically in the evenings, on weekends, and during the winter months. Stadler stated that they can limit the size of piles and stop screening so the piles are not too large, and they can also keep them down in the pit. Felger said he would like to see dust addressed throughout the year. Felger mentioned that there was testimony regarding the application and statements made at the township meeting that were vague, but he feels that an answer was provided, as they simply do not know all the details. Perry confirmed that there is stuff that they just don't know. Perry went on to address truck numbers and noted that if the Commission were to review the provided analysis, the average would be 33 loads per day. He noted that there will be many days when they are not working in the pit and that good compactible fill is needed for the site so that a commercial development can occur, which will take time as they need to be very selective about the material brought back to the site.
- L. Mol stated that, along the lines of comments made by member Mahlberg, he struggles with the land use. He noted that he takes some ownership in how the area has recently been developed. He sat on the Commission when the prior owner rezoned the area to the north to A/R. He recalled that the Commission questioned the applicant at that time about whether there were aggregates present. As noted in the minutes, the response was that the material was no good and the applicant wanted to move forward with rezoning and allowing homes. The Commission ultimately allowed the rezoning and homes on those northern lots, several of which are now owned by MBE. Mol went on to explain that even though the current zoning does not allow mining, there is always the possibility of returning before the Commission to rezone back to AG. Now that area is rezoned and allows homes, and now there is aggregate located in the middle of an area that was allowed to grow. Interim Use Permits have also been granted to businesses in the area. Mol stated that this is the first gravel pit he has ever voted against, as he recognizes that aggregate is very important. Mol shared that he lives on the northwest side of Wright County and is aware of two permitted pits that are currently sitting idle, either because they are not receiving bids or because they are choosing not to operate, he was unsure which. For this reason, he is not convinced that Wright County is running out of gravel. He noted that Clearwater Township, where he lives, consists primarily of sand. He expressed uneasiness with allowing growth to occur and then, as growth increases the need for aggregate, now being asked to place a gravel pit in the middle of an area the Commission previously allowed to grow. He stated that the aggregate should have been removed before growth was allowed. Mol questioned how the Commission can determine what has changed since the last denial, especially given that the property is designated as commercial in the Land Use Plan (LUP). He referenced a comment that a new home is being built next to the subject property. Perry acknowledged that the home and a business are located a few properties away and went on to note that demonstrates that homes are still being built despite the potential gravel pit. Borrell stated that if the gravel is not removed now, someone 20 years from now will question why the material was not used before structures were built. He asked where the line should be drawn. Mol agreed, stating that this was exactly his concern, and questioned when will building and rezoning be stopped. Borrell responded that there are natural resource areas, specifically gravel, that are restricted. Mol agreed but noted that this particular property was not identified that way. Borrell suggested that perhaps the County Board should address the issue and ensure that such resources are not lost. Mol reiterated that he does not believe anything related to the neighborhood has changed since the last request. He stated that what he is hearing is there will be approximately 35 loads per day for about 125 days per year over five years. Once those five years are complete, the applicant could return requesting an additional 10

years, and it is unknown how that future Commission would decide. He noted that there is approximately one million yards of material on the site, and no one knows how long it will take to exhaust that amount. Mol stated that if this were considered a borrow pit operating for only two years, it would be a different conversation. Perry asked the Commission to view this as the first phase of a long-term development plan that maximizes the use of the aggregate while preparing the property for its intended future commercial use, which would provide services or jobs for residents of the approximately 800 new homes. He stated that the property will eventually be developed into a better future use and again asked when the right time would be, if the goal is not to bury and leave the aggregate unused.

- M. Borrell moved to close the public hearing to all oral and written comments, and continue the matter to the January 15, 2026, Planning Commission meeting for staff and counsel to prepare findings consistent with approval.

DISCUSSION: Borrell stated that he does not feel many changes need to be made to the conditions. He believes that, while there are some particulars that may need to be addressed in this situation, he is not willing to restrict hours of operation beyond what is stated in the ordinance.

Holland seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Holland stated that she would like to see the Township add restrictions to roads, and that if the applicant wishes to use those roads, they would need to address that matter directly with the Township. Rhineberger stated that he does not believe the Commission has the authority to require the Township to implement road restrictions. Holland stated that she wants to ensure trucks would be allowed on County Road 113. Mol noted that County Road 113 is regulated by the County.

Mol asked the Commission what types of conditions they would like to consider. Rhineberger noted that for staff to draft findings, there needs to be clear discussion on the record. He stated that he does not want staff creating conditions independently, and he wants to avoid changing findings later if conditions are not thoroughly discussed. He explained that staff need a clear basis to properly establish conditions in the findings.

Borrell stated that there are standard conditions used for other gravel mining operations and that he believes those should be adequate, including regular hours and days of operation. Rhineberger asked whether the Commission wanted to include restrictions on when mining operations can commence, such as tying operations to an approved contract for the roundabout or the completion of the roundabout. He noted that this situation is not a standard one, as many gravel pits do not require this level of findings, and that guidance must come from the Commission regarding desired conditions.

Mol stated that this situation requires more discussion. He noted that the height of stockpiles had already been discussed and emphasized that if such limitations are not included as conditions, an operator would not be required to comply, even if they verbally indicated they would address the issue. Rhineberger asked what specific conditions the Commission would like to see. Felger stated that he had spoken with Stadler regarding halting operations on windy days. Stadler stated that the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) notes, and their plan includes halting screening or crushing operations when winds reach 20 mph or more. Felger stated that his next concern was reducing stockpiles during the winter months and asked the applicant what would be done to address that concern. Rhineberger suggested a condition requiring stockpiles to remain below the height of the pit wall. Stadler agreed but noted that it would take some time to reach that depth. It was agreed that once operations cease in the fall, stockpiles would be no higher than the bottom of the berm. Perry asked for understanding that when the project begins, operations will start at the surface level of the field, and it will take time to excavate down and out of sight. He reiterated that trucks will be operating at field level until they are able to reach lower elevations as quickly as possible.

Felger asked how long it would take to reach 35 feet below ground, and Perry responded that it may never reach that depth, but operations would be below the existing elevation. Stadler stated that if operations are not occurring during the winter, he will ensure that stockpiles are addressed as discussed.

Rhineberger noted that a resident submitted a list of proposed conditions earlier that evening. Mahlberg asked how the Commission wished to address and review the proposed conditions, noting that discussion is necessary. Borrell stated that he had no desire to review the list, as he felt the conditions were written in a way that would effectively prevent the applicant from operating under an Interim Use Permit. Mahlberg stated that there are conditions that must be discussed, including screening. It was agreed that copies of the full list of proposed conditions would be made and distributed to the Commission for review. Felger stated that he would prefer not to discuss conditions already addressed by the ordinance.

Mol called for a 5-minute chairman break at 10:45 p.m. with the meeting called back to order at 10:53 p.m.

DISCUSSION: Borrell stated that he does not see a need to add extra conditions to this operation simply because someone submitted a list of 21 items. He believes the Commission can develop its own conditions based on the discussion held. He reiterated that many standard operating conditions are already used for mining operations, and that he would be comfortable starting with those standards and adding only specific, situation-based conditions.

Rhineberger noted that staff would recommend having clear discussion on the record to support the findings. One recommended condition is that all standards of Section 155.100 be followed, particularly requirements related to dust control and financial surety. He explained that this would cover ordinance requirements such as days and hours of operation, holidays, and similar items that are considered standard and not variable. He noted that the Commission does have authority to vary days and hours of operation, designate haul routes, and include other conditions that are directly related to the request, such as stockpile height limitations. Another potential condition could address a Township review timeline.

Rhineberger further noted that the permit expiration date must be determined and that standard Interim Use Permit (IUP) language, such as provisions related to changes in ownership, sale, or lease agreements would be included by staff, as these are standard for IUPs. He added that there are additional standard conditions regarding traffic flow in and out of the pit. He emphasized that public concerns raised during the hearing are also considered. Rhineberger asked the Commission to review the list of 21 proposed conditions and ask questions as to which ones may or may not already be addressed in the ordinance.

Mol asked whether the Commission was considering a three-year or five-year permit. Borrell and Holland both stated that they feel a five-year permit is acceptable. Felger asked what the ordinance states regarding permit duration. Rhineberger noted that the ordinance allows permits for a period not to exceed ten years. Borrell asked whether the Commission has approved permits for longer than five years, and Rhineberger confirmed that ten-year approvals have occurred.

Mol reminded the Commission that all records are being reviewed and that the goal is to build a clear record that allows staff to draft findings in favor of approval, based on the discussion and materials submitted into the record. Mol also reminded the public that with a motion on the floor, public comment is at the discretion of the Commission. Felger stated that he feels the Commission has done a good job listening to verbal testimony as they determine how to guide staff on conditions.

Holland called the question.

DISCUSSION: Mol reminded the Commission that at the next meeting they will review the drafted findings, and if they are not satisfied with what is presented, they may suggest changes. Mahlberg stated that the screening barrier must be discussed to ensure it is part of the record. He noted that Section 155.100 of the ordinance states that the Commission shall decide on screening barriers. He expressed concern that no discussion has occurred regarding screening and that it is not addressed in the plans. He feels that without discussion, the Commission risks creating an issue due to a lack of record.

VOTE: Holland, Borrell, & Felger NAY: Mol & Mahlberg

MOTION CARRIED

6. **DUANE OSGOOD** – New

LOCATION: 10709 30TH ST NW – PART OF GOVERNMENT LOT 3, SECTION 20, TOWNSHIP 120, RANGE 27, Wright County, Minnesota. (Albion Twp.) Tax #201-000-202105. Property Owner: DUANE OSGOOD & ROSE OSGOOD

Petitions for a Conditional Use Permit for a land alteration to stabilize a pathway that was cut into the bluff by the previous owner by building a 90' long by 8' tall retaining wall on the upslope of the path.

Present: no representative

- A. Rhineberger stated that Mr. Osgood could not attend the meeting and did request we continue his item to the January 15th meeting.
- B. Felger moved to continue the matter to January 15, 2026, at the applicant's request. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. **BENJAMIN SIMON** – New

LOCATION: 2612 STATE HIGHWAY 55 SE - PRT OF W1/2 OF SE1/4 in Section 04, Township 119, Range 25, Wright County, Minnesota. (Rockford Twp.) Tax #215-100-044204. Property Owner: LEE A & MARIAN E WALDON REVTR

Petitions for an Interim Use Permit to operate a fence and shed sales company with commercial contracting to include a showroom within the existing building and outdoor laydown yard, as regulated in Sections 155.031 & 155.055, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of Wright County Code of Ordinances.

- A. Rhineberger stated that the applicant couldn't make it but had sent a representative that ended up turning around with the poor weather and road conditions. They have asked to have the item continued until the January 15th meeting.
- B. Holland moved to continue the matter to January 15, 2026. Motion seconded by Felger.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SITE INSPECTION

The Commission scheduled a site inspection for Monday January 5th, with the Commission to meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Government Center.

Meeting adjourned at 11:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Barry Rhineberger
Planning & Zoning Administrator

BR:sd

cc: Planning Commission, Twp. Clerks