



Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

1408 Lake Street South
Forest Lake, MN 55025
www.ci.forest-lake.mn.us

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

6:00 PM

City Center - Council Chamber

[City of Forest Lake - Livestream and Recorded Meetings](#)

1. Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Girard	Commission Chair	Present	
Susan Young	Commission Vice-Chair	Present	
Andy Aplikowski	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Don Stehler	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Martin Huemann	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Jesse Wagner	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Tim Stender	Planning Commissioner	Present	

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approve the Agenda

No comments on the Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Stender made a Motion to Approve the Agenda as presented.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Young. Motion carried 7-0.

5. Open Forum – Citizen Petitions, Requests, and Concerns

*The Open Forum is available for residents to express personal opinions for any item of business.
Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes.*

None.

6. Consent Agenda Considerations (Action Items)*

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from January 14, 2026

No comments on the Consent Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Item 6.a.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Stehler. Motion carried 6-1 (Aplikowski Abstained).

7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)



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a. Forest Lake Garage Condos located at PIN 20.032.21.12.0006 (Case File No. PZ25-1390 & 1391)

i. Planned Unit Development (PUD) Final Plan

ii. Final Plat

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the Final Plat and Planned Unit Development for the Forest Lake Garage Condos. He noted that the plan set was refined and the total number of garage condo units was reduced from 121 units to 105 units. He clarified that the unit count decreased because of on-site constraints.

Commissioner Stehler asked if they had similar condo projects in Forest Lake. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that it was a unique type of use.

Commissioner Stehler asked if the City reviewed the rules, regulations, and covenants for other condo projects. He asked what would happen if someone spent the night in the garage condo and who would enforce the regulations. Community Development Director Wittman answered that they reviewed the declarations and the City made sure there were no living uses within the facility. She said they were working through minor amendments, but they should be finalized before the City Council approval.

Commissioner Young expressed concerns about snow removal and snow storage. She asked how the edges of the ponds would be protected when snow is piled there. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the stormwater ponds were private.

Commissioner Young wanted to ensure the stormwater ponds maintained the capacity to do their job.

Chair Girard asked for an update on the outdoor storage. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that the outdoor storage is very restricted.

Chair Girard asked if the outdoor storage was only available for condo owners. Community Development Director Wittman answered that outside parties could rent, but would have to purchase into the association.

Chair Girard asked if they got the sewer availability charge and water availability charge for each of the units. Community Development Director Wittman confirmed this information.

Community Development Director Wittman stated that the easements are private easements for the association. She said that there would be maintenance agreements with the watershed.



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Commissioner Young asked about the plan for screening the contractor's yard. Community Development Director Wittman responded that the property needed to be returned for site plan review at the time of the building's construction.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked if there was any proposed landscaping at the outlot for outdoor storage. Community Development Director Wittman answered that they considered the existing woodland.

Austin Hallberg, Hallberg Marine, said he had no concerns about the current discussion.

Scott Peterson, 8860 152nd Street North, Hugo, introduced himself. He stated that the scale was difficult to understand because it was for a 30-acre parcel. They wanted to get the snow removal correct.

Commissioner Huemann asked if they plan to haul snow away if they cannot contain it on site. Mr. Peterson confirmed this information.

Chair Girard noted that it was not a public hearing, but guests could make any comments. No comments were made.

Motion: Commissioner Stender made a Motion to recommend Approval of the Forest Lake Garage Condos final planned unit development and final plat, subject to the conditions of approval as listed in the staff report.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Young. Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Girard noted that this item will go before the City Council for final action.

8. Discussion

a. BOOST Initiative

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the pyramid of discretion. He stated that they are proposing the code authority updates for clarity, predictability, process, and outcomes. He reviewed different changes to the code.

Commissioner Young asked if they would be consulting with professional staff about administrative decisions. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore confirmed that every site plan review is sent out to the professional staff for review to help inform the decision. He suggested providing an overview of decisions with the Planning Commission during the consent agenda.



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Community Development Director Wittman clarified that the administrative approvals for the site plan would be discussed further, but they did not know the defined process currently.

Chair Girard confirmed that there would be an internal review process that other people would be informed of.

Commissioner Huemann asked if they would eliminate one meeting and have a small committee review the information. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore clarified that it would streamline the process.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore provided examples of situations where the code would need changes.

Commissioner Young said that the proposed façade of the building was different and would not have looked appropriate in the community. The Planning Commission was able to ensure that the building fit into the standards of the community. Community Development Director Wittman answered that in her previous work, the design guidelines and standards could be used as tools. The staff was able to approve decisions if they fell within certain guidelines. She stated that more changes to the code would help the process.

Community Development Director Wittman stated that paint color was difficult to legally regulate. She said it was important to reevaluate some of the design standards and guidelines. She said if the design conforms to code, the staff can review the information.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked how you would inform the public. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the staff should bring major items before the Planning Commission, and they wanted to inform the community of changes.

Commissioner Huemann asked if there would be a committee when making a decision. Community Development Director Wittman responded that when there is a zoning code, it would be one person administering the law. She said if an item was of concern, they would bring it back to the Planning Commission.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said if an applicant is not satisfied with a minor change decision, they can appeal the decision to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Young reviewed the suggested changes on the first page.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said one issue was the definition of planned unit development.



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Commissioner Young provided feedback on the multi-family industrial definition. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore confirmed they would double-check the definition.

Commissioner Young asked why the City Council no longer directs staff to complete the study for particular uses. She said it lessens the policymaker's ability to require studies to help inform their decisions. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that they suggested removing it because it is redundant with the zoning amendment section.

Community Development Director Wittman said they were trying to eliminate the duplicity of policy and progress.

Commissioner Aplikowski clarified that if they removed it from this section, it would not be removed from other sections.

Commissioner Young said that the Community Development Director determined whether a proposed use is substantially similar to a permitted accessory or a conditional use. She stated that the decision would impact all future applications. Community Development Director Wittman said they would make notes about the concerns about long-term impacts on future uses. She stated that the legal counsel would be consulted.

Commissioner Young voiced concerns about scope creep and that the policy and procedure would have the potential to creep.

Chair Girard asked about determination and suggested it should be on page three between items one and two.

Commissioner Young asked about the determinations that would be final unless appealed in accordance with the chapter. She asked how people would know if a decision was made. Community Development Director Wittman answered that it would refer to the applicant who could appeal the decision.

Commissioner Young discussed the subdivision north of 97. Community Development Director Wittman clarified that subdivisions would still come back before the Planning Commission, since the language referred to similar uses.

Chair Girard asked if it should read zoning ordinance text amendments so that the verbiage would be consistent.



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Commissioner Young suggested clarity for filling amendments, since she was not sure if the staff, Council, or Planning Commission should do the fee. Community Development Director Wittman said that they would look at the language while still trying to slim the code.

Chair Girard asked if it was worth separating the text amendments from the map amendments. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that the deliverables they need were different, so it was helpful to define both items. He said that they had the same filing requirements and fees, but the definitions clarified what was applicable.

Community Development Director Wittman said that the City did not pay fees or put together an application, but she will check about the language with the legal counsel.

Commissioner Young said that the term reasonably on page seven was problematic and suggested a definition of reasonably. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that they would check the language with legal counsel.

Commissioner Young asked about the Planning Commission and staff reports being a part of the permanent record of the City Council meeting. Community Development Director Wittman answered that they would review the information with legal counsel. She said it would be a part of the permanent record by State statute, but she did not think it was necessary to state in the code.

Commissioner Aplikowski suggested a repository of information to be more efficient.

Commissioner Young stated that the City Council meeting minutes were part of the public record. She asked about the difference in the number of votes for the approval of a zoning ordinance amendment and a zoning map amendment. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the difference was due to the State statute.

Commissioner Young asked about the creation or reduction of non-conformities. She asked why they wanted to create them. Community Development Director Wittman responded that you did not want to create them.

Commissioner Young discussed the compatibility with surrounding development problems. She asked if it was an assumption that the long-term expectations would be that it would all be either residential or industrial. She asked about the compatibility of development and how they would consider the options. Community Development Director Wittman said that they could look at the evaluation criteria to make sure they fit Forest Lake.



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Commissioner Young requested examples of amendments that would benefit the City as a whole. Community Development Director Wittman referred to the cell phone tower ordinance as an example.

Commissioner Young clarified that any single-family detached and two-family dwelling would not require site plan review. Community Development Director Wittman stated they do not currently require site plan review. She clarified that it would not need site plan review if the zoning district allowed single-family detached and two-family dwellings, but they would still make sure it conformed to the zoning code.

Commissioner Young asked about lighting and if they would make sure a light does not impact neighboring properties. Community Development Director Wittman answered that it did not address the regulation of lighting, but the plans they did want to see for lighting. They were adding the language to provide clarity.

Chair Girard asked if they should see a preliminary plan and then a final plan. Community Development Director Wittman responded that they needed to align the nomenclature better. They wanted to align the information better with internal discussions about sketch plans.

Chair Girard suggested adding the language “prior to developing a site plan.”

Commissioner Young asked about things exempted from review that would impact the community. Chair Girard clarified that the staff would still review items, although the Planning Commission would not review certain items.

Community Development Director Wittman suggested revisiting the design guidelines.

Commissioner Aplikowski suggested referring to already established code.

Community Development Director Wittman said the goal was to refer to the standards.

Commissioner Young asked about including a definition of discretionary judgment on page 13.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that all of the requirements, definitions, and procedures would be included in one chapter to provide clarity on how to develop in Forest Lake.

Commissioner Young asked if materials were a major or minor decision. Community Development Director Wittman said she would double-check that the lists were consistent.



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Chair Girard thanked those for the feedback and suggested emailing Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore about changes to move the meetings along.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said they also provided graphic suggestions to help make information more easily understandable.

9. Updates

Councilmember Larson stated he had no updates. He introduced the new deputy city clerk. He thanked Commissioner Huemann for his service on the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Huemann thanked the City staff for their time to help train him.

Community Development Director Wittman said a new commissioner will join the Planning Commission next month. They would have an election of officers at the first meeting of February. She suggested it would be beneficial to see a different chair next year.

Assistant Community Development Director Wittman discussed Chapter 150 that they would work on in future meetings.

Commissioner Aplikowski said he would miss the next meeting.

10. Adjourn

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Huemann. Motion carried 7-0.