



MINUTES

Mankato Planning Commission June 25, 2025 - 6:00 p.m. IGC - Mankato Room

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Zehnder called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner's Present: Chair Zehnder, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Wilke, Mr. Dieken, Mr. Iddings, Ms. Surdy, Mr. Meister,

Staff Present: Molly Westman-Planning and Zoning Administrator, Bennett Hanson-Economic Development Specialist, Travis Johnson-Permit Technician, Brittany Mitchell-Planning Coordinator.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Meister made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Surdy seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Wilke made a motion to approve the minutes from May 28th, 2025. Mr. Iddings seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

1. May 28, 2025 Draft Planning Commission meeting minutes

4. OLD BUSINESS

No old business

5. NEW BUSINESS

1.

CY28-25

Request of Trellis, with permission of the property owner, for a rezone of the subject properties from M-1, Light Industrial, to O-R, Office Residential; for a preliminary and final plat review of Mankato Housing LP subdivision; for a planned unit development; for the vacation of alleys generally described as a 15-foot wide public alley running east-west in said Block 17 lying between the easterly line of Minnesota Department of Transportation Right of Way Plat No. 07-29 and the westerly line of a 15-foot public alley running north-south between Linder Avenue and Sibley Parkway, together with a 15-foot wide public alley running north-south in said Block 17 lying between the north line of Linder Avenue and the south line of Sibley Parkway; for the vacation of a portion of Sibley Parkway street, dedicated as Patterson Avenue, on the plat of Oakwood Addition and being generally described as located between Poplar Street and the Abandon Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway, an area containing 15,221 square feet, more or less. The subject properties are generally described as the north 46.66 feet of south half of Block 17, Oakwood Addition, all of Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company's 25-foot-wide property in Block 17, All of Block 17 West of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway except the north 46 2/3 feet of the south 1/2 of said Block 17, all according to the map of Oakwood Addition, Outlot A, Sibley Parkway No. 2, City of Mankato, Blue Earth County. (Blue Earth County PIDs R010813253001, R010813253002, R010813253010, etal, 750 Linder).

Mr. Hanson reports that staff respectfully submit the following findings of fact for the preliminary and final plat:

1. General Requirements

1. No wetlands were determined to exist within the subject property.
2. The site is designed in conformance with the location and widths of streets, the general drainage situation, lot sizes and arrangement.
3. A grading and drainage plan has been submitted for review by City Engineering Staff.

2. Streets

1. The applicant will not construct any new public street and one curb-cut will provide access to the development from the already developed Poplar Street.
2. The plat dedicates a new portion of Sibley Parkway, which better aligns with the current roadway improvements.
3. The address for the development on Lot 1 will be assigned the name "751 Poplar Street".

3. Easements

1. The plat provides the standard easements required in Chapter 10. Article 7 of the Mankato City Code.
2. The plat dedicates a 20' wide utility easement through the center of Lot 1, Block 1.

4. Block Standards

1. The one-block, one-lot subdivision within the subdivision was designed for the intended end use as a multifamily residential development.

5. Lot Standards

1. The subject parcel is a corner lot* and provides sufficient depth for building setbacks along all three street frontages.
2. The proposed lot depicts a development that achieves front yard setbacks of 20'.
3. The proposed lot is proposed with a double-frontage (lots with frontage on two parallel streets), which is essential to overcome conditions which render subdividing otherwise unreasonable. The proposed lot provides an additional depth of at least 20 feet in order to allow space for screen planting along the rear lot line.
4. The proposed lot is an adequate size to allow space for all facilities associated with the intended end use as a multifamily residential development.

6. Public Sites and Open Spaces

1. The applicant will not be paying a parkland dedication fee, as all parcels within the plat have previously been platted.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff respectfully submit the following findings of fact for the planned unit development:

1. The planned unit development satisfies the intent of the City of Mankato ordinance and does not jeopardize public health, safety, or welfare.
2. The development of the planned unit development will conform to the approved development plan; including all proposed covenants, easements, conditions of approval, and other provisions relating to the bulk, location, and density of permitted structures, accessory structures, parking, and other public facilities.
3. A condition is included with the approval that requires that all land shown on the approved development plan as common open space must be conveyed to trustees provided in the indenture establishing the association or similar organization for the maintenance of the planned unit development.
4. A condition of approval is included for the development of the open space for use of the residents, and no common open space may be put to any use not specified in the approved development plan.
5. The development identifies public benefits, which allows for flexibility from the Minimum Parking Standards for multifamily developments.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff respectfully submits the following findings of fact pertaining to the requested alley vacation:

1. The owner of the affected property has petitioned to vacate the two alleys proposed for vacation.
2. The applicant has provided notice to the utility companies with a copy of the vacation request and has provided responses from the utility companies. Utility companies did not identify any utilities located in the vacated alleys. Based on this response, the alleys are no longer needed for public purposes.
3. An active Sewer Line runs through both alleys proposed to be vacated. A 20' utility easement has been proposed to be dedicated at the time of platting of the subject property.
4. The proposed vacation is necessary for the development of the subject parcel.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff respectfully submit the following findings of fact pertaining to the requested roadway vacation:

1. The City of Mankato has petitioned to vacate the subject portion of Sibley Parkway.
2. The portion of Sibley Parkway proposed to be vacated was never improved as a Public Street following its dedication as such.
3. The City of Mankato states that the subject portion of Sibley Parkway is not necessary for traffic circulation, and therefore, the vacation of the described portion of roadway would relieve the City of any responsibility for maintenance or construction.
4. The applicant has provided notice to the utility companies with a copy of the vacation request and has provided responses from the utility companies. Utility companies did not identify any utilities located in this portion of Sibley Parkway. Based on this response, the street is no longer needed for utility purposes.
5. The proposed vacation is necessary for the development of the subject parcel.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends the approval of the preliminary plat and final plat.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends the approval of rezoning of the property from M-1, Light Industrial, to OR, Office Residential District.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends approval of a planned unit development with the

following conditions:

1. The applicant shall obtain a rental license prior to the occupancy of the units.
2. The applicant shall prohibit outside storage, refuse, or other debris.
3. The applicant shall submit association documents to the City at the time of request for the first building permit for the development. Association documents shall address ownership, financing, and maintenance of all common areas, utilities, and streets/private roads.
4. Signage for the development shall conform to Mankato City Code standards and a sign permit shall be obtained for any proposed signage prior to fabrication and installation.
5. The applicant shall provide common open space amenities for gathering, such as an outside patio or gathering area or areas with benches or other seating within the development.
6. Any tree removal from the public right of way will need to be replaced in conformance with City Ordinance.
7. The applicant shall agree to install a sidewalk along the portion of Sibley Parkway abutted by the subject property in conjunction with future sidewalk improvements on adjacent properties along Sibley Parkway.
8. The applicant has provided a parking concept plan representing on-site parking improvements that would occur should the reduced parking flexibility of .975 stalls per unit be insufficient. The applicant shall construct the concept parking improvements if on-site parking is found to not adequately serve the subject use.
9. The applicant will be subject to Water Access Connection and Sewer Access Connection fees. The fees shall be \$101,082.80 and shall be submitted prior to issuance of a building permit.
10. If the future use of the property changes from the approved Planned Unit Development, parking and other zoning requirements shall achieve the Mankato City Code unless an amended Planned Unit Development has been granted by the Mankato City Council.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends approval of vacation of the 15-foot-wide alley running east-west in Block 17, Oakwood Addition.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends approval of vacation of the 15-foot-wide alley running north-south in Block 17, Oakwood Addition.

Mr. Hanson reports that staff recommends approval of vacation of an estimated 15,221-square-foot portion of Sibley Parkway, publicly dedicated as "Patterson Avenue" on the plat of Oakwood Addition to Mankato.

Justin Eilers, Trellis & David Haaland, Urbanworks Architecture. Mr. Eilers and Mr. Haaland were present at the meeting to answer any questions the commission may have. Mr. Haaland emphasized the overall goal was to create a long-lasting, durable, and maintainable building. Feedback was gathered from community members, potential residents and staff. From that, they were able to create such things as fitness rooms, meeting rooms, offices, and a small gathering room. In addition, he mentioned a connection to the courtyard and patio that included seating and grill stations. Sidewalks are around the perimeter of the building to allow for connections to the local trails. The building also had a focus on energy efficiency to keep those long-term costs down and provide a high quality of life for the residents.

Chair Zehnder opened the public hearing for comment, with no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Ms. Johnson indicated that it was a wonderful project and thanked the applicants.

Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the preliminary and final plat, the rezoning of the

property, the planned unit development with conditions, the vacation of alleys and the vacation of a portion of Sibley Parkway. The motion was seconded by Ms. Surdy. The motion passed unanimously.

The anticipated date of City Council action is July 28, 2025.

2.

CY29-25

Request of Fisher Development for rezoning of properties from P-I, Planned Industrial, to R-3, Limited Multiple Dwelling District. The subject properties are described as Columbia Park Add, Block 10, Lot 4; Columbia Park Add Block 9, Lots 1,2; Columbia Park Add Block 7, Lots 9-16; Columbia Park Add Block 8, Lots 1-8; Germania Park Add Block 24 Lots 1-6, City of Mankato (Blue Earth County PID R010906331009, R010906184004, R010906180008, etal).

Ms. Westman reports that staff respectfully submits the following findings regarding the proposed rezone from P-I, Planned Industrial, to R-3, Limited Multiple Family Residential.

1. The rezoning from P-I, Planned Industrial, to R-3, Limited Multiple Dwelling District is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive land use plan, as adopted and amended from time to time by the City Council.
2. The rezoning is compatible with the overall character of existing development in the immediate vicinity of the affected property.
3. The proposed R-3 zoning classification is consistent with adjacent properties in the immediate vicinity.
4. The proposed rezoning will not interfere with or diminish the use of property in the immediate vicinity.
5. The properties do not currently have adequate public facilities, but with the implementation of the Germania Park Phase 5 Capital Improvement Project, the development parcels will be served by adequate public facilities, such as streets and utility services.

Ms. Westman reports that staff recommends approval of the rezoning of the subject parcels from P-I, Planned Industrial, to R-3, Limited Multiple Family Residential.

Brett Skilbred, CEO Fisher Development Company. Mr. Skilbred was present at the meeting to answer any questions that the commission may have.

Chair Zehnder opened the public hearing for comment, with no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the rezoning of the subject parcels from P-I to R-3. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meister. The motion passed unanimously.

The anticipated date of City Council action is July 28, 2025.

3.

CY30-25

Request of Widseth, with permission of the property owner, for the preliminary plat review of Good Counsel Meadows subdivision. The subject property is described as part of Outlot C, School Sisters of Notre Dame Subdivision, a portion of vacated Ruth Street as shown in the Subdivision of Outlots Dukes Second Addition – Highwood, part of Outlot B, School Sisters of Notre Dame Subdivision, part of Lots 1, 2, 1, 18, Block 13, Shaw's Subdivision, City of Mankato, Blue Earth County (Blue Earth County PID

R010905379004, R010905379005, etal).

Ms. Mitchell reports that staff recommends the following findings:

General Requirements:

1. The site is designed in conformance with the location and width of streets, the general drainage location, lot sizes and arrangement.
2. A drainage study has been submitted to verify compliance with the city drainage requirements.
3. The site provides storm drains and stormwater ponds that outlet into the city's stormwater facilities at the rates and volumes allowed by the MS4 permit.

Streets:

1. The street right-of-way widths conform to the standards listed in Chapter 10 of the Mankato City code by meeting the right-of-way standards.
2. The proposal will vacate a portion of Ruth Street.

Easements:

1. The proposed preliminary plat provides the standard easements required in Chapter 10 of the Mankato City Code.

Block Standards:

1. The blocks within the subdivision were designed for the intended end use as residential lots.

Lot Standards:

1. The lots within the subdivision are intended for residential development. The lots are designed in conformance with the standards set forth in Chapter 10.
2. The concept plan for the residential areas conforms to the minimum lot size requirements.

Public Sites and Open Spaces:

1. The applicant is not required to make a park dedication as the property was previously platted.

Ms. Mitchell reports that staff recommends approving the preliminary plat with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide a hydraulic report in conformance with the grading manual.
2. The applicant shall enter into a subdivision agreement for any public improvements made to the property.
3. The proposed ponds should be located on separate outlots and publicly owned.
4. The lighting in the residential areas shall meet the city lighting standards for residential neighborhoods.
5. The applicant dedicate any easements or right-of-way on the final plat.
6. The applicant shall work with the Department of Public Works to determine if the access road be considered private or a public alley.
7. The applicant shall obtain a final plat prior to any construction beginning on the site.
8. The applicant shall be required to pay water and sewer connection fees. That fee will be \$2,527.07 per residential unit and would apply at time of permitting.

Breanne Rothstein, consultant representing Southwest Minnesota Partnership & Jen Theneman, Director of Real Estate and Community Development at Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership. Ms. Rothstein and Ms. Theneman were present at the

meeting to answer any questions the commission may have and to present a slideshow introducing the Southwest Minnesota Partnership. This slideshow highlighted who the partnership is and what goals and timelines they aim to meet when it comes to the development of Good Counsel Meadows.

Chair Zehnder questioned if there would still be a pedestrian connection between the lower and upper parts of the development, including the stairs that are currently present.

Ms. Theneman indicated the existing sidewalk from N. 4th Street to the steps will be maintained and has been considered part of the design.

Chair Zehnder opened the public hearing for comment.

Kristi Lawton, President Tourtellotte Park Neighborhood Association. Ms. Lawton stated that she had been to several of the public meetings in relation to this project. Block one was discussed at these meetings, and she indicated that people appreciated the fact that the development would mirror the surrounding neighborhood. She was surprised by block two because it was not mentioned at any meeting that she was present at. It was her understanding that lot 3 was not supposed to be developed because of hills and trees. She indicated that she was representing the owners on the other side of lot 3 and questioned why this was added.

Ms. Lawton also indicated that she had questions from another neighbor who was unable to attend this meeting. There were several questions that included whether the city has any data on affordable housing being converted into VRBO type properties and do these affect the availability of affordable housing in the area. What is the definition of affordable housing for 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom homes in Mankato? Are the applicants required to live in Mankato for a period of time before applying? Any additional points for veterans and whether applicants are required to be US citizens. Who pays the property taxes on the land portion of the properties in the community land trust? Has any consideration been given to breaking the pasture area off and selling it separately? Does the city require the property owner to involve any of the local tribes before the property is developed?

Mike Spellacy, 1730 N 2nd St. Mr. Spellacy indicated that he has lived within two blocks of the pasture property for over 50 years and has enjoyed the green space the pasture has provided to the neighborhood. He referenced past plans that were presented at public meetings and were later dropped after opposition from the neighborhood. He referenced the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who have always been strong allies in protecting the livability of this older neighborhood. Mr. Spellacy referred to Sister Gladys Schmitz as a name that came to mind that was a strong voice for environmental causes. Mr. Spellacy had a brochure that was published in 2014 by the SSND about land ethics that he reviewed with the commission. Mr. Spellacy finished by asking the SSND to honor their land ethics statement and find another way to protect one of the largest undeveloped green spaces in central Mankato. He added that he would ask the planning commission to go slow, be thorough and consider that these decisions are going to be long-lasting.

Margo Druschel, 312 W 7th St. Ms. Druschel indicated that she was a prior board member of the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership for 8 years and has lived in Mankato for 17 years. She indicated that West Mankato has a similar neighborhood to Tourtellotte and there is continued pressure for both development and land preservation. She indicated that the School Sisters of Notre Dame still have a presence in our community and agonized for years about what to do with this property. She added it was heartbreaking for them to leave their homes, adding that their service to the community went on for over 100 years. Ms. Druschel indicated that she was present at the 2021 meeting for the first development, and she felt that this new plan meets almost all the things that were proposed at that meeting. She encouraged

the commission to continue to listen to the Tourtellotte neighborhood but not to allow their objection to overwhelm what has become a process that was started, halted and then made more in line with the surrounding community.

Sister Joyce Kolbet. Ms. Kolbet still lives in the Mankato/North Mankato area and was present at the meeting. She mentioned Sister Gladys Schmitz and her willingness to stand up for unmet needs in the community. Sister Gladys was a promotor of land, earth, and spirituality, but she was also concerned about social justice issues, especially unmet needs. Ms. Kolbet indicated that this project was about responding to unmet needs in our community and this was the mission of the SSND. She indicated that SSND has been working with the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership for several years and thanked them for continuing to carry out the vision and the mission of the SSND.

With no one wishing to speak further, the public hearing was closed.

Jen Theneman, Director of Real Estate and Community Development at Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership & James Arentson, Architect at Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership. Ms. Theneman and Mr. Arentson came back in front of the commission to answer several of the questions that were brought forth during the public hearing. Ms. Theneman stated that they have held several community open houses to be transparent and answer any questions. She indicated some of the questions that Ms. Lawton had presented earlier, had been commented on verbally and answers had been posted on neighborhood websites. Originally, they were looking at just 8 lots. They had contracted with Widseth and as they reviewed the property, they found more space that they could potentially build on. The plans shown to the commission showed 3 lots. Lots 1, 2 and the left side of lot 3 will have homes on them and the right side of lot 3 will be left empty. Ms. Theneman also indicated that a meeting was held with the neighbors that would be located right next to lot 3. She indicated this was a nice conversation about what their desires were, and those neighbors indicated that they were interested in acquiring some of the parcels to create some separation between them and this development. Mr. Arentson indicated that they would be following up with these neighbors to go over purchase options. He also added that lot 3 has sections that would be difficult to develop and don't align with the size or design of the proposed home.

Chair Zehnder asked if they could discuss how the land trust works.

Ms. Theneman indicated this model offers access to housing for those who may not typically be able to afford or obtain it. The land trust separates the improvements on the land from the value of the land. The land at the time of the transaction goes into the partnership community land trust, which is a subsidiary of their organization that is managed by a separate board of managers. Any person that owns a community land trust home can be a member of that board of managers intending for it to be self-managed. Owners that are buying the homes are then buying them at a reduced cost. They have written several grants and have gotten several commitments from different organizations to help reduce the cost of these homes.

Mr. Arentson noted that the cost to build a home similar to those currently in the Tourtellotte neighborhood can be more than \$100,000 higher than when many of the existing homes were originally constructed. This can make it unobtainable for potential buyers, and the community land trust aims to equalize new development with the value of existing homes.

Mr. Wilke thanked the applicants for bringing the project forward and being so thorough in their review and proposal.

Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the preliminary plat with conditions. The motion was seconded by Ms. Surdy. The motion passed unanimously.

The anticipated date of City Council action is July 14, 2025.

4.

CY31-25

Request of Northern Natural Gas Co. for a conditional use permit to allow the expansion of an existing essential service utility facility located in the R-1, one-family dwelling district, and for a variance to allow for the continuation of an 8' barbed wire fence in the residential district. The subject property is described as a tract of land located in the north 13.90 acres of the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 19, Township 108 North, Range 26 West, Blue Earth County. (Blue Earth County PID R010919226001 and R010919226002, 1204 and 1210 Warren Street).

Ms. Westman reports that staff respectfully submits the following findings of fact for the requested conditional use permit to allow the operation of an essential services facility in the R-1, one family dwelling district.

1. The proposed use as an essential services facility is considered a conditional use permit in the R-1 zoning district.
2. The request is in keeping with the comprehensive planning policies of the City as the underlying land use plan identifies this parcel as "low density residential", where as facilities are necessary to serve residences and other related uses.
3. The proposal does not interfere with or diminish the use of property in the immediate vicinity. The existing facility has operated at this location in the past and there has been no indication of interference or diminished property values in the immediate vicinity.
4. The proposal will be served public facilities and services as necessary.
5. The proposal does not cause undue traffic congestion as the site will be accessed for maintenance and servicing purposes, and parking stalls, if added, will be required to conform to the Code criteria. There are no proposed changes to the access to the Site from Warren Street.
6. There are no known historical or architectural resources on the site.
7. There is a natural and environmental features on the site, a bluff/ravine. There are no impacts proposed, and the applicant intends to maintain the code required 10' setback with the proposed expansion.
8. It will not cause a negative cumulative effect and effect on the City as a whole.
9. To the extent known, the development conforms with all other applicable regulations of the district, and other applicable ordinances.
10. The proposal will not jeopardize the public's health, safety, or general welfare.

Ms. Westman reports that staff respectfully submit the following findings of fact for the requested variance to allow for the installation of a barbed wire fence in the R-1, one-family dwelling district.

1. The applicant has established that conforming to the strict letter of the provisions of this chapter would create a unique and particular hardship because of the necessity to provide safety and security, and a minimum height fence for the site.
2. Unique and Particular Hardship. Unique and particular hardship is defined as the property is exceptional as compared to other property subject to the same provisions by reason of a unique physical condition, including the presence of an existing use or structure, whether conforming or nonconforming; irregular or substandard shape or size; exceptional topographical features; or other extraordinary physical conditions peculiar to and inherent in the subject lot. The hardship shall amount to more than a mere inconvenience to the owner and the hardship shall relate to the physical situation of the lot rather than the personal situation of the current owner of the lot. The applicant has demonstrated that given the presence of the existing use and facility, there is a unique

and particular hardship .

3. Not Self-Created. The unique physical condition and hardship is not the result of any action or inaction of the property owner or its predecessors in title. The unique physical condition shall have existed at the time of the enactment of the provisions from which a variance is sought or was created by natural forces or was the result of governmental action, other than the adoption of this chapter. The current site has been at the location previously.
4. Denied Substantial Rights. The carrying out of the strict letter of the provision from which a variance is sought would deprive the owner of the subject lot of substantial rights commonly enjoyed by owners of other property subject to the same provisions. The installation of the fence will deprive the owner the ability to continue the existing fencing style and conditions and will, additionally, deprive the owner of the ability to continue to secure their site to the established safety protocols.
5. Not Merely Special Privilege. The alleged hardship does not include the inability of the owner or occupant to enjoy some special privilege or additional right not available to owners or occupants of other lots subject to the same provision. The alleged hardship shall not include the inability of the property owner to realize a greater profit than if the variance were not granted.
6. No Other Remedy. There are no means other than the requested variance by which the alleged hardship can be avoided or remedied to a degree sufficient to permit a reasonable use of the lot.
7. Variance Less Than Requested. There is no known variance that is less than or different from that requested, which would provide the applicant with the right to some relief but not to the relief requested.
8. Essential Character of the Area. The variance would not result in a development on the lot that:

1. Would be materially detrimental to the public welfare or materially injurious to the enjoyment, use, development, or value of property or improvements permitted in the vicinity.
2. Would materially impair an adequate supply of light and air to the properties and improvements in the vicinity.
3. Would substantially increase congestion in the public streets due to traffic or parking.
4. Would unduly increase the danger of flood or fire.
5. Would unduly tax public utilities and facilities in the area.
6. Would endanger the public health or safety.
7. Would not be in harmony with the general and specific purposes of this chapter and the comprehensive planning policies and objectives of the City.

Ms. Westman reports that staff recommend approval of the conditional use permit to allow the expansion of the essential services facility and the variance with the following conditions:

1. Screening on the west side, also known as the front yard, of the facility shall be incorporated in accordance with the Mankato City Code.
2. The installation of equipment will be subject to achieving Minnesota Rule standards 7030 related to noise. The applicant will be responsible for obtaining noise studies and implementing mitigation strategies, in the event that issues arise related to the noise from the new equipment.
3. If new exterior lighting is proposed, it shall achieve Mankato City Code. This requires, but is not limited to, full-cut, fully shielded light fixtures and a photometric plan demonstrating that lighting levels at the property line do not exceed 1/2 foot candle.
4. The finished side of the fence should face outward in conformance with the Mankato City Code.

Mitch Kleist, Northern Natural Gas. Mr. Kleist was present at the meeting to explain what the station is, the reason behind the expansion and answer any questions the commission may have.

Ms. Surdy questioned the need for a heater at this location.

Mr. Kleist explained that a heater is at this location currently, and it would be more of an upgrade. He indicated that other antiquated equipment would also be replaced.

Ms. Surdy asked where the current heater was located.

Mr. Kleist indicated the heater is located on the south side of the site.

Ms. Surdy questioned if the current heater was being removed and why expansion would be needed if it was removed.

Mr. Kleist indicated the current heater would be removed, adding that the new heater couldn't fit into that site. Another issue is that Centerpoint Energy has 2 mains located on site, meaning there is equipment for both Centerpoint Energy and Northern Natural Gas. Both companies felt the need to expand to have better operational capacity.

Ms. Surdy questioned the need for barbed wire on top of the proposed fence.

Mr. Kleist indicated that it's a standard for the governing bodies that Northern Natural Gas operates under. They try and accommodate requests from local jurisdictions, but it is something they cannot work around from a safety and security perspective. He noted that they will add additional trees for screening on the south side and are open to any other recommendations. He also added that this town border station is unique because they don't operate many that are in residential areas.

Ms. Surdy stated that using an easement rather than purchasing the land would provide a financial benefit to the company.

Mr. Kleist indicated that they are not adding any additional volume or a new customer, but rather they are improving what is already there.

Chair Zehnder added that the variance is just related to the barbed wire on the fence. This would be more for safety and not financial gain.

Mr. Iddings thanked Northern Natural Gas for maintaining the area and added that the planned screening will help ensure it does not become an eyesore.

Mr. Kleist added that the Church of Christ has always been great to work with and thanked them for their continued support.

Mr. Dieken noted that this improvement is located towards the back of the property and the visibility of it will be low.

Chair Zehnder opened the public hearing for comment.

Mary Behrens, 1223 Warren St. Ms. Behrens indicated that she has lived with this facility for years and has not caused her family any issues. She indicated they hear the chillers from MSU quite often, so another noise issue from this project would be a problem for them. She also added that the sidewalk in front of the facility is narrow. She would request that the City of Mankato look at these sidewalks to ensure they are friendly to bikes or those with disabilities. Ms. Behrens added that it is a ravine that is located behind this facility, not a bluff. She wanted to note that drainage that runs into that ravine from this project must be considered.

With no one wishing to speak further, the public hearing was closed.

Chair Zehner questioned whether any screening on the west side of this project would encroach onto the sidewalk.

Ms. Westman indicated that no screening would encroach onto the sidewalk. The idea would be that the fence would provide screening and wouldn't be moved out towards the sidewalk.

Mr. Iddings made a motion to approve the conditional use permit and variance with conditions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meister. The motion passed unanimously.

The anticipated date of City Council action is July 28, 2025.

6. **MISCELLANEOUS**

Ms. Westman indicated that this would be the last meeting for Ms. Johnson and Mr. Meister. She thanked them for their service and valued their time and insight. She also indicated that two new members would be present at the meeting next month.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Wilke moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meister with all in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED.

Chair, Mankato Planning Commission