



City of Blaine

Planning Commission

April 8, 2025 | 7:00 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The Blaine planning commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Tuesday, April 8, 2025. Chair Goracke called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. Administration of Oaths of Office - Goracke, Halpern, Swanson, Geiselhart, Howard

City Clerk Sorensen administered the oath of office to Commissioners Goracke, Halpern, Swanson, Geiselhart and Howard.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman requested the planning commission elect a chair and vice chair. She called for nominations for the chair and vice chair positions.

**Motion by Commissioner Halpern to elect Al Goracke Chair of the Planning Commission.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Gorzycki. The motion passed 6-0.**

**Motion by Chair Goracke to elect Jason Halpern Vice Chair of the Planning Commission.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Swanson. The motion passed 6-0.**

4. Roll Call

Members Present: Commission Members Geiselhart, Gorzycki, Halpern, Howard, Swanson, and Chair Goracke.

Members Absent: Commission Member Olson.

Staff Present: Shawn Kaye, Planner
Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist
Alex Koberoski, Zoning Technician
Sheila Sellman, Assistant Community Development Director
Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer

5. Approval of Minutes

- 5.1. 2024-476 Approval of the March 11, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes
Sponsors:

Motion by Commissioner Halpern to approve the minutes of March 11, 2025, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Swanson. The motion passed 6-0.

6. Public Hearing

- 6.1. 2025-143 Case File No. 25-0008 // Alex Pepin // 1684 132nd Avenue NE
The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit to allow a detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in a Single Family Residential (R-1) zoning district.
Sponsors: Alex Koberoski, Zoning Technician

The report to the planning commission was presented by Alex Koberoski, Zoning Technician. The public hearing for Case File 25-0008 was opened at 7:12PM.

Dave Hime, 1670 132nd Avenue NE, commended Alex and Linda Pepin for what they are trying to do, but noted he has concerns with the proposed tiny house. He reported he lives in a development with private single-family homes and was not intended to be low-income housing. He stated he has lived in his home for the past 40 years and would be the most impacted by this project. He questioned why the organization they are associated with doesn't purchase acreage, versus trying to fit this tiny home on a city lot. He suggested his neighbors sell their home, purchase acreage and build a home and tiny home. He expressed concern with how the value of his home would be reduced by having a tiny home so close to his property. He explained the proposed tiny home would block his view of the sun and the sky. He indicated the enlargement of the driveway was not necessary. He expressed concern with how the noise and traffic coming from his neighbor's property would increase. He reported his neighbor's house had six bedrooms and could accommodate a mother-in-law suite in the basement. He requested that the planning commission deny approval of the request. However, if the item were to be approved, he asked that no windows face his backyard and that a wood privacy fence be installed all the way around the property, including the park. He explained he wanted to go around the neighborhood and spoke with many of his neighbors. He stated he has not found one person that believes this tiny home is a good idea, but had 51 signatures against it.

Jeff Brekkestran, 1700 132nd Avenue NE, explained when he purchased his home 30 years ago, he appreciated not having anyone in his backyard. He commented on how the proposed tiny home would serve as a homeless shelter and noted this would be disruptive to the neighborhood.

Michele Kurak, 13196 Eldorado Street, stated she had safety concerns and feared her property value would decrease. She questioned who would be responsible for monitoring

the behavior of those living in the tiny home. She inquired how many people would be in the tiny home at one time, noting the proposed unit would not be used for a mother-in-law. She asked if neighbors could band together to get the law changed back to its previous language and not allow ADU's in the R-1 zoning district. She stated she was against the proposed request.

Emma Johnson, 1615 132nd Avenue NE, explained she received a letter regarding a proposed mother-in-law suite and explained the Pepin's were proposing to use this tiny home as secondary housing for low-income individuals. She indicated the applicants would have to receive a rental license if this was their plan. She reported she lives right next to the park and there were things that happened to her. While she appreciated what the Pepin's were trying to do, she was of the opinion this was not the right place for an ADU that would house low-income individuals given its close proximity to the park.

Brad Johnson, 1615 132nd Avenue NE, stated he was opposed to the ADU request. He understood the Pepin's go on mission trips and were affiliated with the 1030 Homes. He explained he was concerned that there would be a homeless encampment in his neighborhood.

Rod Lamb, 1528 132nd Avenue NE, reported he visits the park often with his grandchildren. He discussed what follows homeless encampments. He explained he takes care of the property at his church and discussed how his church allowed an individual to complete some community service work which then led to the church garage being broken into. He stated he understood he was generalizing, and he would like to learn more about who would be living in the proposed ADU. He questioned if Blaine would be getting money from the state for the ADU. He commented on the city's zoning standards and discussed how if the city were to allow this ADU, it would be a slippery slope and future requests would also have to be approved. He questioned how the adjacent park would be impacted if every home around the park had an ADU. While he appreciated the efforts of the Pepin's he suggested this ADU not move forward.

Dennis Elvidge, 1685 131st Avenue NE, voiced opposition to this request. He asked if the principal structure had to be owner-occupied or could the home be rented out also. He was of the opinion that this ADU would change the neighborhood and recommended the ADU not move forward.

The public hearing was closed at 7:31PM.

Chair Goracke invited the applicant forward at this time.

Alex Pepin, 1684 132nd Avenue NE, explained he plans to always live in his home while the ADU is on his property. He reported the idea of an ADU came about after he started a non-profit in 2017 to help families coming out of homelessness. He stated over the years in working with these families, he understood how difficult it was to find affordable housing, and he and his wife had considered what more they could do. He explained this led him to consider placing an ADU in his backyard given the growing need for affordable housing in the community. He indicated the ADU would only be used for families of up to four people. He stated he also had aging parents that could benefit from the ADU as could his children in the future. He commented as a Christian he believes this was something he was

called to do, to help people in need. He apologized to his neighbors for how this came about noting he was simply trying to see if this was allowed and then he was going to have conversations with the neighbors. He indicated he was willing to do anything to make this work, noting he would be willing to install a privacy fence and hedges. He commented he would also be willing to have the neighbors sit in on the interviews with the future families. He reiterated that he was not trying to start a homeless shelter in his backyard, but rather wanted to help families by providing an affordable housing option that would assist them with getting out of homelessness. It was his hope that the families would remain in the ADU for a year or two in order to develop a base to move onto the next stage in life.

Chair Goracke asked how the future tenants would be vetted.

Mr. Pepin explained the families would go through an application process and background checks would be completed. He understood he would have to go through the rental license process. He stated he would be willing to involve the neighbors in the vetting process.

Chair Goracke questioned if Mr. Pepin would be willing to not have windows on the side of the ADU that faces Mr. Heim's backyard.

Mr. Pepin stated he would be willing to rotate the window to face his garage. He commented further on how he plans to live in his home indefinitely and explained he does not want problems in the park either.

Commissioner Halpern inquired how Mr. Pepin would locate families in need that would then be vetted for placement in the ADU.

Mr. Pepin explained he would work with local churches and Family Promise of Anoka County.

Commissioner Halpern stated rental property was always a concern in single-family neighborhoods and questioned how the city would monitor this rental license.

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman explained the city has a robust rental program and the city allows single-family homes to be rented. She reported the city has a rental application process and annual inspections are completed. In addition, she noted the rental licenses have to be renewed on an annual basis.

Commissioner Gorzycki commented that there appeared to be a great deal of concerns from the neighbors. He questioned if the applicant would be willing to draft a code of conduct for the potential renters/families living in the ADU.

Mr. Pepin stated he has not drafted a code of conduct but indicated he would be willing to consider this further. He explained he struggled with putting rules in place that other people do not have to abide by.

Chair Goracke suggested the lease include certain expectations for the future tenants.

Mr. Pepin indicated this was a good point and may be a good way to address this matter. He

explained he would be living 17 feet away from these individuals, and he hoped this would help with good behavior. He reiterated that this ADU would be used for his parents at some point in time. He believed that it was amazing Blaine allowed ADU's on single-family lots to offer additional housing options for the community.

Commissioner Swanson questioned what would be charged for rent and who would be paying the rent.

Mr. Pepin reported the rent would be paid by the tenant and noted he would only be charging 30% of their income or up to \$1,400, which was the market rate for a two-bedroom apartment.

Chair Goracke commended Mr. Pepin for having a big heart and for working to help people in the community. He requested staff speak to the public notice requirements for the city of Blaine.

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman reported state statute requires notification for public hearings to be within 350 feet of the subject property. She explained city code has this same requirement.

Chair Goracke questioned how residents could make a zoning change request.

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman stated the current zoning code allows ADU's in the single family zoning district through a conditional use permit. She reported the only way to change something in city code would be to apply for a zoning code amendment.

Commissioner Swanson stated she was torn on this issue. She indicated there was a lot of discussion from the neighbors that the ADU would be a burden, but on the other hand, the homeowner would have explained the ADU would be used for their own family a portion of the time. She stated it feels uncomfortable to allow homeless individuals to live on this lot.

Commissioner Gorzycki explained the conflict in the neighborhood could be due to the manner in which this request came about and because the property abuts the park. He stated the request may be putting an excessive burden on the neighbors and the park even though the applicant's intent was very noble.

Motion by Commissioner Gorzycki to recommend denial of Planning Case 25-0008, a conditional use permit to allow a detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in a Single Family Residential (R-1) zoning district based on Section 27-04 for excessive burden on the existing park. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Halpern stated he could support approval of the request with an additional condition that would require the applicant to install a privacy fence between the adjoining properties and that the ADU's windows be moved.

Motion by Commissioner Swanson to recommend approval of Planning Case 25-0008 based on the following conditions:

Case 25-0008:

1. **Occupancy of the ADU is limited to up to two adult individuals and the parents and children of each, with no more than one person per 150 square feet.**
2. **No home occupations involving outside customers coming to the property shall occur in the ADU.**
3. **The principal structure and ADU must remain on the same parcel and shall not be divided through any means, including, but not limited to, filing of a plat, a waiver of platting, or a Common Interest Community (CIC).**
4. **A rental license shall be obtained if someone other than the homeowner or a member of the homeowner's family occupies the ADU.**
5. **Three trees will need to be planted on the property, in accordance with Section 33.09. An escrow of \$1,200 for tree replacement or a \$1,200 payment into the City's reforestation fund is due at time of building permit issuance.**
6. **The additional parking space shown on the site plan must be constructed before a Certificate of Occupancy (C/O) is issued to the ADU.**
7. **A Certificate of Survey shall be provided with the building permit application. This Certificate of Survey will show the proposed grading around the ADU and will be required to maintain the overall existing drainage patterns.**
8. **An as-built survey will be required to verify structure elevations, custom grading requirements, and final lot grading elevations.**
9. **A sidewalk/hard surface is required for ingress/egress from the proposed new car parking pad to the front door of the ADU.**
10. **The proposed ADU will be required to obtain utility connections from the primary structure. Utility drawings showing the location of the proposed connections will need to be provided with the building permit application.**
11. **Standard water and sanitary sewer access charges (WAC & SAC) become due with each building permit at the rate established at the time the building permit is issued.**
12. **A 6-foot privacy fence shall be constructed along the entirety of the rear yard, and no windows are permitted on the west side of the ADU. These requirements will need to be met prior to issuance of the C/O.**

Motion seconded by Commissioner Halpern. The motion passed 4-2 (Commissioners Gorzycki and Howard opposed).

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the May 5, 2025 city council meeting.

- 6.2.** 2025-144 Case File No. 25-0009 // The Goddard School of Blaine // 12612 Central Avenue NE
 The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit amendment to allow a 8,522 square-foot addition to an existing childcare center in a Development Flex (DF) zoning district.
 Sponsors: Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist

The report to the planning commission was presented by Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist. The public hearing for Case File 25-0009 was opened at 8:01 PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 8:01 PM.

Kyle Olson, representative for the developer, explained he was available for comments or questions.

Chair Goracke questioned how many children would be served after the building expansion.

Mr. Olson reported the maximum capacity would be 103 children in the facility. He commented on how the gym space could be used for special events.

Chair Goracke inquired if the facility had adequate parking.

Community Development Specialist Showalter reported the applicant would be meeting the city's parking requirements.

Motion by Commissioner Gorzycki to recommend approval of Planning Case 25-0009 based on the following conditions:

Case 25-0009:

- 1. Expansion of the childcare use is permitted, subject to performance standards listed in Chapter 33 of the Zoning Code and the following setbacks:**
 - **North: 20-foot building, 10-foot play area and parking**
 - **West: 100-foot building, 25-foot play area and parking**
 - **South and East: 50-foot building, 30-foot play area and parking**
- 2. The proposed and any future building additions must be architecturally compatible with the existing building and utilize glass, brick, stone, and fiber cement siding products on each facade. Zoning administrator may approve alternative facade designs that utilize equivalent or higher quality materials.**
- 3. Landscaping plan must conform with the landscaping quantities listed in 33.07 with at least 25% of the trees oversized. Overstory trees must be 3 caliper inches to be considered oversized and conifers must be 8 feet tall to be considered oversized. Based on the plans submitted, 8 trees must be oversized.**
- 4. This resolution rescinds and replaces Res 19-104.**
- 5. Provide a copy of the issued Coon Creek Watershed District Permit.**

Motion seconded by Commissioner Swanson. The motion passed 6-0.

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the May 5, 2025 city council meeting.

- 6.3.** 2025-142 Case File No. 25-0007 // iONNA EV // Southeast corner of Naples Street and Flowerfield Road
The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit to allow an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station and a zero lot line for a shared drive on the east property line in the Community Commercial (B-2) zoning district.
Sponsors: Shawn Kaye, Planner

The report to the planning commission was presented by Shawn Kaye, Planner. The public hearing for Case File 25-0007 was opened at 8:07PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 8:07PM.

Chair Goracke asked if this would be the first stand-alone charging station in Blaine.

Planner Kaye reported this was the case, but there are EV charging stations at Cub locations.

Commissioner Halpern questioned why this location was chosen.

Eli Sankey, representative for the applicant, stated it was his understanding the real estate team chooses locations based on proximity to the freeway.

Commissioner Gorzycki asked if these chargers would be compatible for all electric cars.

Mr. Sankey explained Level 3 chargers would be installed that were compatible for the NAC and CCS vehicles.

Motion by Commissioner Halpern to recommend approval of Planning Case 25-0007 based on the following conditions:

Case 25-0007:

- 1. Site plan approval will be required as a part of the building permit application.**
- 2. All site improvements to be included in the Site Improvement Performance Agreement (SIPA) and covered by an acceptable financial guarantee.**
- 3. All lighting on site must meet requirements established by Section 33.02 of the Zoning Ordinance. Freestanding light structures are limited in height to not more than 20 feet.**
- 4. Developer to provide a copy of their Rice Creek Watershed permit to the City prior to any site work.**
- 5. A copy of the shared access/parking agreement between lots must be submitted to the Planning Department prior to any work being allowed on site.**
- 6. Developer to provide additional documentation clarifying the elevation of the Level 3 DC fast-charging stations, in relation to flood plain elevation, does not create a construction concern or issue.**

Motion seconded by Commissioner Howard. The motion passed 6-0.

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the May 5, 2025 city council meeting.

- 6.4.** 2025-165 Case File No.25-0010 // City of Blaine // Southwest Corner of Lexington Avenue and 125th Avenue NE.
The City is requesting preliminary plat approval to create two outlots and right-of-way dedication for the Zest Street extension.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Sheila Sellman, Assistant Community Development Director. The public hearing for Case File 25-0010 was opened at 8:12PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 8:12PM.

Commissioner Halpern expressed concern with the amount of traffic moving in this area, especially at the Zest Street Lexington Avenue intersections.

Project Engineer Barnes reported the proposed intersection at 125th and Zest was slated to get a stop light. She noted this was part of Anoka County's plans. She commented the intersection at 122nd and Lexington Avenue received a stop light last year. She further discussed how Zest Street would run through the project and across the city owned parcel in order to connect to future Lakes Parkway.

Chair Goracke inquired if this was the exact preliminary plat that had already been approved.

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman reported this was the case.

Motion by Commissioner Swanson to recommend approval of Planning Case 25-0010 based on the following conditions:

Case 25-0010:

- 1. The developer will need to modify the plat to provide additional right-of-way and restricted access on 125th Avenue (CSAH 14) and Lexington Avenue (CSAH 17) per the County's plat review letter dated November 2, 2022.**
- 2. Adjust the Zest Street right-of-way to allow for a design that meets state aid standards for a 30 mph roadway, and coordinates with the proposed street extension to the south.**
- 3. All development signage by separate review.**
- 4. Final plat is required within one year of approval.**

Motion seconded by Commissioner Geiselhart. The motion passed 6-0.

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the April 21, 2025 city council meeting.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Gorzycki to adjourn the regular planning commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Halpern. The motion passed 6-0.

Adjournment time was 8:13PM.