



**Planning Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
September 4, 2025  
6:30 PM**

North St. Paul City Hall – Council Chambers  
2400 Margaret Street

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Blees called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

COMMISSION

Patrick Blees, Chair

Andrew Wise, Vice-Chair

Arthur Alvarez, Jr., Commissioner

Absent

Stephanie Kane-Burback, Commissioner

Elizabeth Gadbois, Commissioner

Cameron Muhic, Commissioner

Jim Rathe, Commissioner

STAFF/LIAISONS

Jason Nordby, City Council Liaison

Ken Roberts, Community Development Director

**III. ADOPT AGENDA**

Blees asked for a motion to adopt the September 4, 2025, meeting agenda.

M/Rathe, S/Wise.

Motion carried 6-0.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Approval of August 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Blees asked for a motion to approve the August 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes.

M/Rathe, S/Gadbois.

Motion carried 6-0.

**V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

There were no public comments.

**VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Cowern Elementary School – CUP Amendment and Site Plan

Roberts presented the Cowern Elementary School – CUP Amendment and Site Plan item to the Planning Commission. Roberts presented aerial maps and site and design plans for the Cowern School addition. The school district plans, if approved to do so by the City, plans to have the project out for bid by later this year, construction beginning spring of 2026 and going through phases through 2028. The site is currently

zoned for R-1: Single-Family Residential. The Comprehensive Plan does not have a designation for institutions or public uses, so it is included in the R-1: District. In the R1: Zoning District, schools are allowed as a conditional use. The application meets the criteria for conditional use permit. The school is currently on four separate properties. It is staff recommendation that these properties be combined as a condition of approval. Roberts discussed the parking plan and landscaping plan. The final design of the stormwater retention pond is subject to the Watershed's approval. Roberts also reviewed the architectural details of the proposed expansion project. Staff recommends approval of the CUP amendment subject to the conditions detailed in the official documents.

Ms. Chambers, the architect with the Applicant Team, spoke to the traffic flow off South Ave. The south lot is currently existing as visitor/ADA parking, but the main entry is on Margaret Street. The bus lot will be signed for buses only during school hours. Muhic asked if the applicant had looked at introducing a right turn lane from South Avenue East due to a MnDOT rule requiring it if their expected traffic flow is 100 or more movements per day. Greg Buchal, a Civil Engineer with the project did have conversations with the County about that, but they indicated they would rather not have a right turn lane in that location.

Chair Blees opened the public hearing at 7:05 PM.

Chair Blees closed the public hearing at 7:06 PM.

Chair Blees asked for motion to recommend to City Council approval of the Conditional Use Permit Amendment and site plan approval for the expansion at Cowern Elementary School.

M/Rathe, S/Wise.  
Motion carried 6-0.

#### B. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments

Roberts presented the Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments item to the Planning Commission. The text amendments clarify certain non-encroachments from setback requirements and language in the code regarding expansions on existing structures that have nonconforming setbacks. Roberts noted the changes from the previous Planning Commission meeting.

Chair Blees opened the public hearing at 7:15 PM.

Chair Blees closed the public hearing at 7:16 PM.

Nordby asked if this is something that should first be reviewed by the Code Compliance Department. The Planning Commission directed staff to submit the ordinance to Code Compliance for review.

Chair Blees asked for a motion to recommend approval to the City Council of the zoning text amendment that amends the standards for permitted encroachments and additions to nonconforming structures.

M/Muhic, S/Gadbois.  
Motion carried 6-0.

#### C. Subdivision Ordinance Amendment

Roberts presented the Subdivision Ordinance Amendment item to the Planning Commission. The amendment includes clarification on the park dedication fees and how they are calculated, details in the provisions requiring development contracts and adding language to accept security from developers in the form of an Irrevocable Letter of Credit from a bank. Roberts noted the comments from the City Engineer and City Attorney.

Chair Blees opened the public hearing at 7:25 PM.



Chair Blees closed the public hearing at 7:26 PM.

Chair Blees asked for a motion to recommend approval to the City Council of the subdivision ordinance amendment that alters the standards for permitted encroachments and additions to nonconforming structures.

M/Rathe, S/Wise.  
Motion carried 6-0.

#### **VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no Commission Business, Action Items or Recommendations.

#### **VIII. REPORTS**

Roberts reminded the Planning Commission of the Open Meeting Law rules.

Roberts noted that the City Council approved the Home Occupation Ordinance on August 19, 2025, with no changes.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 PM.

M/Rathe, S/Gadbois.  
Motion carried 6-0.

**The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, October 2, 2025, at 6:30 PM.**

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Chris Cherne  
Planning Commission Secretary  
651-747-2440  
[chris.cherne@northstpaul.org](mailto:chris.cherne@northstpaul.org)