

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, June 2, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Weber called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. OATH OF OFFICE

Community Development Support Specialist Bodsberg administered the Oath of Office to new Planning Commissioners Jennifer Hellam, Scott Thomas and Madeline Walsh.

3. ROLL CALL

Commissioner(s) Present: Jonathan Weber
Robert Heidenreich
Connor Gosell
Amy Hunting
Jennifer Hellam
Scott Thomas
Madeline Walsh
Aida Schaefer
Dennis Wippermann

Commissioner(s) Absent: None.

Staff Present: Jason Ziemer, Community Development Director
Kevin Shay, Planning Manager
Ben Schneider, Senior Planner
Stacy Bodsberg, Community Development Support Specialist

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A. Election of the 2026 Planning Commission Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.

Chair Weber stated that new commissioners are seated annually, and the election of Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary would be conducted.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Gosell to Close Nominations and Elect Jonathan Weber by Unanimous Consent to the position of Chair.

Ayes: 8 (Weber Abstained)

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Schaefer to Close Nominations and Elect Amy Hunting by Unanimous Consent to the position of Vice-Chair.

Ayes: 8 (Hunting Abstained)

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

Motion by Hunting, Second by Heidenreich to Close Nominations and Elect Aida Schaefer by Unanimous Consent to the position of Secretary.

Ayes: 8 (Schaefer Abstained)

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Thomas, Second by Hunting, to Approve the Agenda as Published.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the May 5, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Hunting, to Approve the Minutes as Submitted.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Table the Request by Darren Lazan, Landform Professional Services, for a Conditional Use Permit, Major Site Plan Review, and Easement Vacation on properties located at 1037 50th Street East, 4600 Akron Avenue, and 4605 S. Robert Trail. (Item has been tabled since March 3, 2026, Planning Commission meeting)

Motion by Thomas, Second by Schaefer, to table the item until July 7, 2026, Planning Commission meeting.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

B. Request by Ron and Patti Deters for a Variance from the maximum fence height within a front yard and a Variance from the minimum visibility percentage of a fence in the front yard located at 7948 Cooper Court.

Reading of Public Notice

Chair Weber read the Public Hearing Notice.

Presentation of Request

Senior Planner Schneider reviewed a Variance request for fence height and fence transparency at 7948 Cooper Court. The property is guided LDR, Low Density Residential, zoned R-1C, Low Density Residential and is considered a through lot with frontage on both Cooper Court and 80th Street East. The applicant requested a Variance from the maximum front yard fence height to allow a 6-foot-tall fence where 4-feet is permitted and a Variance from the front yard fence visibility requirement to allow a privacy fence where a minimum visibility percentage of 75% is otherwise required.

The requested fence would be located along the southern property line. The primary reason for the request is Dakota County's trail project along 80th Street, which will eventually include a regional trail running adjacent to the property. As part of that project, vegetation along the property line was removed, resulting in the loss of privacy the property owners had enjoyed for many years. The proposed privacy fence would restore that privacy.

The request was determined to be in harmony with the City Code and Comprehensive Plan, allow reasonable use of the property, involve circumstances unique to the property that were not created

by the landowner, not alter the essential character of the locality, and not rely solely on economic considerations.

Approval was recommended for two Variance requests, including a Variance from the maximum fence height requirement within a front yard to allow a 6-foot-tall fence where the maximum permitted height is 4-feet, and a Variance from the minimum visibility requirement for a front yard fence to allow a privacy fence where at least 75% visibility is otherwise required.

Commissioner Gosell stated that he believed similar Variance requests could become more common in the future and asked whether there may be an opportunity to evaluate the City Code and consider adjustments for front yard fence requirements in situations like this. Schneider stated that staff are open to discussing potential City Code changes and would also be interested in hearing whether the City Council has similar thoughts. The current request should be evaluated based on the established Variance criteria, although future discussions regarding possible City Code Amendments could occur.

Commissioner Thomas questioned whether any neighboring property owners had objected to the request after notices were sent to surrounding properties. Schneider stated that no comments, either in support of or opposition to the request, were received from neighboring property owners.

Opening of Public Hearing

Ron & Patti Deters, 7948 Cooper Court, urged approval of the request, noting that they have lived at the property for 42 years. The fence is being put up because approximately 600 feet of mature lilacs and vegetation, 12 to 15 feet tall, were removed as part of the Dakota County trail project, resulting in a significant loss of privacy for their property and neighboring yards.

Kassandra Fries, 7920 Alberta Way, stated that she was not attending regarding the Variance request but was familiar with the situation. Many community members expressed disappointment over the removal of the vegetation and questioned why it had been taken out, particularly since the trail project is not expected to be developed soon. Is supportive of the request.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Hunting stated that she had visited the site and observed that fence posts had already been installed. Based on her observations, she did not believe either the increased fence height or the proposed privacy fencing would create a safety hazard and expressed support for the request. She also suggested that staff consider future City Code changes for non-corner through lots, allowing secondary front yards to be treated differently from primary front yards. She noted that stricter regulations make sense for the front yard containing the driveway, house frontage, and address for emergency response purposes, but felt the same requirements may not be necessary for secondary front yards. She added that corner lots present different circumstances and should continue to be treated separately.

Motion by Heidenreich, Second by Schaefer, to Approve the Variance requests subject to conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0

Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on June 22, 2026.

C. Request by G-Cubed, Inc. for a Site Plan Review for the construction of two 11-unit storage facilities and a Conditional Use Permit Amendment to allow a mini-storage facility in the I-1, Limited Industry Zoning District located at 10125 Courthouse Boulevard.

Reading of Public Notice

Chair Weber read the Public Hearing Notice.

Presentation of Request

Senior Planner Schneider reviewed a Major Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit Amendment request for Inver Grove Storage at 10125 Courthouse Boulevard. The 5.5-acre property is guided LI, Light Industrial, zoned I-1, Limited Industry, and is currently used for outdoor ministorage under a Conditional Use Permit and shipping container storage under an Interim Use Permit. The proposal includes construction of two mini-storage buildings in two phases and requires approval of a Major Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit Amendment.

The site plan includes two 11,000-square-foot mini-storage buildings containing 11 units each, a new stormwater filtration basin, designated parking spaces, relocation of shipping containers to locations fully screened by the new buildings, and phased removal of the existing privacy fence. Setback requirements, parking standards, and impervious surface and building coverage standards were met, and no tree mitigation was required.

Architectural plans call for 81.6% vertical LP SmartSide engineered wood siding and 18.4% vertical steel siding. The proposed building materials comply with the City's architectural standards. The Conditional Use Permit standards include consistency with the goals, policies, and plans of the City Comprehensive Plan and compliance with the Zoning Code. The proposed use must not be materially injurious to existing or planned properties or improvements in the vicinity, create an undue adverse impact on existing or planned City facilities, and must remain generally compatible with existing and future uses of surrounding properties. Additional considerations include whether the property is appropriate for the proposed use based on its natural and physical features and whether the use would create any undue adverse impacts on public health, safety, welfare, or the environment.

Approval was recommended for the Major Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit Amendment request to construct two mini-storage buildings at 10125 Courthouse Boulevard. The recommendation included conditions requiring the property owner to enter into a Site Improvement Agreement for all private exterior amenities in accordance with City Code Section 10-15J-10 and requiring the plans to be updated to show that the existing fencing south of the site access remain in place until construction of the phase two building is completed.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that she had driven by the site and was surprised to find that the frontage road ended at the property. She asked whether there were any plans for the frontage road to continue in the future. Schneider stated that there are currently no plans to extend the frontage road. The area consists of a very old, unplatted lot, and while future subdivision or platting could prompt additional review, the presence of a railroad track would also limit any potential extension.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that she observed vehicles for sale on or near a neighboring property and asked whether the Conditional Use Permit would allow vehicle sales at the site. Schneider stated that the Conditional Use Permit does not allow vehicle sales. If vehicle sales were

occurring on the property, it would be considered a matter of Code Enforcement and would be addressed if brought to the City's attention.

Commissioner Thomas questioned whether the applicant had provided a timeline for completion of the two construction phases and whether the project could potentially extend over a lengthy period. Schneider stated that no timeline had been provided for the second phase. The first phase would likely begin once permits are issued, but the applicant had not indicated when the second phase would occur. There is no date associated with the approval and that even if phase two occurred many years in the future, it could proceed as long as it remained consistent with the approved site plan. Building permits would still be required at that time, but the project would not need to return through the approval process.

Commissioner Thomas inquired as to which of the proposed buildings would be constructed during phase one. Schneider stated that the north building is proposed as phase one.

Commissioner Thomas inquired as to whether the shipping containers are required to be placed on a concrete pad or similar surface. Schneider stated that the Interim Use Permit does not address that level of detail. The shipping containers were approved as a temporary use and are required to be removed from the property when the Interim Use Permit expires in 2032.

Commissioner Thomas inquired as to whether approval of the current request would extend the permitted use of the shipping containers. Schneider stated that it would not. If the site plan review were not approved, the existing shipping containers could remain on the property until 2032, when the Interim Use Permit expires.

Commissioner Thomas questioned the location of the 56 parking spaces shown on the site plan. Schneider explained that some features that appear to be parking spaces on the plan are locations for shipping containers. The parking spaces are located along the western edge of the property and on the south side of the site adjacent to the proposed building, while the smaller squares shown on the north and center portions of the site represent the relocated shipping containers.

Opening of Public Hearing

Grant Griffin, Applicant, 14070 Highway 52 Southeast, Chatfield, stated that he spoke with the property owner, who is aware that the fencing will remain in place throughout construction and the phased development process. The owner plans to remove the north fence first and the south fence second to maintain security for existing customers during the transition.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Hunting stated that the proposed buildings would be a significant improvement to the site and would look very nice. The fence on the southern portion of the property should remain in place until that phase of the project is completed. She also asked what is currently being stored in the shipping containers. Mr. Griffin stated that the containers primarily hold miscellaneous household items and belongings that owners do not want exposed to the elements. Based on his observations while on site, the storage appeared to consist largely of personal property.

Commissioner Hunting noted that the existing office building is proposed to be removed and asked whether there would still be an office on site. Mr. Griffin stated that the owner plans to utilize space in one of the storage units at the same location as the current office, connecting to the existing plumbing and creating a small office area in the back corner of the building.

Commissioner Hunting inquired if someone is present on site each day to check in tenants or if tenants access the facility independently. Mr. Griffin stated that customers enter the facility using a gate access code and that he did not believe staff are regularly present on site.

Commissioner Walsh inquired about the anticipated timeline between completion of the two phases. Mr. Griffin stated that the owner intends to begin the first phase as soon as permits are obtained and would like to complete the second phase within the following year, depending on available funding.

Commissioner Schaefer questioned whether Mr. Griffin could confirm that vehicles displayed for sale on the property do not belong to the applicant or the facility's customers. Mr. Griffin replied that he could not confirm exactly which vehicles were being mentioned. He recalled surveying near an older truck located close to the northeast corner of the property and believed it may have belonged to the neighboring property to the north. Schaefer stated that she was trying to understand whether neighboring property owners were allowing vehicles or other items to be displayed for sale on the site and what activities are permitted. Mr. Griffin responded that he did not believe the vehicles belonged to the property owner.

Commissioner Gosell noted that the shipping containers must be removed by 2032 and observed that they are still incorporated into the site plan. What is the long-term plan for those areas once the containers are removed. Mr. Griffin indicated that those spaces could potentially be redeveloped with additional storage buildings or continue to be used for outdoor storage.

Commissioner Thomas inquired whether campers are allowed to be stored at the facility and whether people are permitted to live in or stay overnight in those campers. Mr. Griffin clarified that campers may be stored on the property, but they are not permitted to be used for living accommodation or overnight stays.

Motion by Gosell, Second by Heidenreich, to Approve the Major Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit Amendment requests subject to conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Ayes: 8 (Thomas Abstained)

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on June 22, 2026.

D. Request by Pulte Homes of MN, LLC, to Rezone from A, Agricultural to an R-3A, PUD designation; and a Preliminary Plat for the development of 46-unit attached townhomes; and a Planned Unit Development for the flexibility of the number of units within a building, from the limit of 4-units per building to 6-units per building and the length of streets within a cul-de-sac to exceed the street length by 100 feet located at 7927 Argenta Trail.

Reading of Public Notice

Chair Weber read the Public Hearing Notice.

Presentation of Request

Senior Planner Schneider reviewed a Preliminary Plat, Preliminary Planned Unit Development, and Rezoning request for the Dawson Woods development located at the southwest corner of Argenta Boulevard, Yankee Doodle Road, and Argenta Trail. The 8.1-acre property includes a unique

configuration due to an existing single-family property located at 7923 Argenta Trail and is guided LMD, Low-Medium Density Residential but currently zoned A, Agricultural. The proposed development consists of 46 owner-occupied townhome units, a density consistent with the City's Low-Medium Density Residential land use designation, and requires approval of a Preliminary Plat, Preliminary Planned Unit Development, and Rezoning. The Preliminary Plat establishes the new lot lines and subdivision layout, while the Preliminary Planned Unit Development addresses the overall site design and allows consideration of requested City Code flexibility. The Rezoning request would bring the property's zoning into alignment with its future land use guidance.

The Future Land Use Map identifies the property as Low-Medium Density Residential, consistent with many of the surrounding properties in the area that carry the same land use designation. The applicant is requesting to Rezone the property from A, Agricultural to R-3A, High Density Residential the zoning district that corresponds with the City's Low-Medium Density Residential designation and allows densities of 4 to 8 units per acre. The R-3A district contains the applicable development standards for the proposed townhome development. In addition to the rezoning request, the applicant is seeking a Planned Unit Development designation because several City Code flexibilities are proposed. The property is also located within the Northwest Area Overlay District, which includes additional development standards that supplement or supersede the requirements of the underlying zoning district. Developments within the Northwest Area Overlay District are required to proceed through the Planned Unit Development process, even when no code flexibilities are requested.

The proposed development includes 46 townhome units arranged in a combination of 4-unit and 6-unit buildings for a total of 9 residential buildings. Seven outlots are proposed throughout the site for stormwater management and open space, including a central infiltration stormwater management facility located within Outlot B. Each townhome unit would include a two-car garage, with driveways providing space for two additional vehicles. A 6-foot sidewalk is proposed along one side of the neighborhood street network, and a resident amenity area featuring a fire pit is planned between Blocks 4 and 5 on the southern portion of the site.

The plan also retains an existing private driveway that currently serves as the sole access to the property immediately west of the development. The neighboring property owner wishes to maintain the driveway, which is protected by an existing easement, and the applicant has coordinated with that owner to accommodate the access while incorporating additional tree plantings, screening, and adequate snow storage areas. If the western property develops in the future, the intent would be to remove the private driveway and establish a different access arrangement. Additional details regarding the process and financial assurances for future driveway removal will be addressed during review of the Final Plat and Final Planned Unit Development applications. The neighboring property owner would not be required to sell or develop the property at any time.

The proposed development meets the applicable development standards for setbacks, building separation, parking, and open space. All buildings comply with the required 20-foot front yard setback and the minimum 20-foot separation between buildings. Parking requirements are also met through the provision of two-car garages for each unit, and guest parking requirements are exceeded. The Northwest Area Overlay District requires one guest parking space for every four units, and street parking may be counted toward that requirement. In addition, each driveway can accommodate two vehicles, and no parking concerns are anticipated with the proposal. The development also exceeds the open space requirements of the Northwest Area Overlay District. While 1.6 acres of open space is required, the plan provides approximately 3.9 acres. The

requirement that at least half of the open space remain undisturbed and ungraded is also satisfied. Additionally, at least 75% of the required open space must be contiguous, and the proposal exceeds that standard by providing approximately 2.5 acres of contiguous open space where 1.2 acres is required.

Tree preservation and landscaping plans include preservation of 66 trees along the perimeter of the property. A total of 1,378 caliper inches is required, with 578 caliper inches provided, and 206 new trees are proposed compared to the 46 trees required by Code.

Three City Code flexibility requests are included with the proposal. The first would allow impervious surface coverage of 46.6%, exceeding the 35% maximum. Support for the request was based on the project exceeding open space requirements, providing additional tree plantings, and utilizing stormwater infiltration practices that support stormwater and natural resource management goals. The second flexibility request would allow five 6-unit buildings where City Code limits buildings to 4 units. Support for the request was based on the irregular shape of the site and the desire to maximize the number of units while maintaining a density of approximately 5.7 units per acre, which remains within the permitted range of four to eight units per acre. The final flexibility request would allow one road to extend approximately 600 feet, exceeding the 500-foot maximum length for dead-end roads. Support for the request was based on site constraints created by stormwater facilities and the road's ability to provide future access to the property west of the development.

A neighborhood meeting was held on November 10, 2025, and was attended by approximately 30 residents. The primary topics raised by attendees involved traffic impacts and stormwater management. A traffic generation memorandum was submitted with the proposal and included information regarding anticipated traffic impacts associated with the development.

Approval was recommended for the Rezoning, Preliminary Plat, and Preliminary Planned Unit Development request at 7927 Argenta Trail for construction of 46 townhome units, subject to satisfaction of all conditions identified in the June 2, 2026, staff report.

Chair Weber stated that he has a financial interest in a property connected to the proposed development and asked whether he would need to recuse himself from the proceedings or could simply abstain from voting. Schneider stated that he could participate in the discussion and abstain from voting without formally recusing himself.

Commissioner Thomas asked where David Jensen's property is in relation to the proposed development. Schneider explained that David Jensen is the owner of the property immediately west of the site and utilizes the existing private driveway that is proposed to remain.

Commissioner Thomas asked whether there were any details regarding the driveway arrangement that should be considered before final action is taken on the proposal. Schneider explained that the development could proceed as long as the existing driveway access remains intact and is not altered without the neighboring property owner's permission. The applicant and neighboring property owner have been working toward a revised Easement Agreement because portions of the existing driveway extend beyond the current easement boundaries. Due to the driveway having existed in its current location for many years, no changes are being required at this time. Instead, the parties are pursuing an updated Easement that would encompass the full driveway area and more accurately reflect existing conditions.

Commissioner Schaefer noted that the report identified Argenta Trail as the sole point of access for the proposed neighborhood and asked why access could not be provided from Yankee Doodle Road. Schneider explained that Yankee Doodle Road is a Dakota County roadway and that the County would not permit direct access due to traffic volumes and roadway safety considerations. Argenta Trail is the only viable access point and the proposed Alberta Way connection aligns with Alberta Way across the street, which has long been identified as the intended access location for the development.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether access to the development could be provided from Yankee Doodle Road through the addition of a turning lane. Schneider explained that Dakota County generally only permits direct access to a development when no reasonable alternative exists. Because access can be provided from Alberta Way and Argenta Trail, the County would not support a new access point onto Yankee Doodle Road. Limiting access points along major arterial roadways helps maintain traffic flow and improves roadway safety.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that she is very familiar with the Argenta Trail corridor and has observed a significant increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the area. She expressed concern about the additional traffic that could be generated by the development and questioned whether a more gradual transition from the existing pattern of large-lot single-family homes would be appropriate. While supportive of providing a variety of housing options, she stated concerns about the proposed density and its potential impact on the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Schneider acknowledged those concerns and noted that the property carries the same Low-Medium Density Residential land use designation as many nearby properties. The land use guidance is intended to address transitions in development intensity and suggested that the low-medium density designation reflects an effort to limit density in the area compared to medium- or high-density residential uses. Locations near major roadways and intersections are generally appropriate for somewhat higher residential densities because they are better equipped to accommodate additional traffic.

Commissioner Schaefer expressed concerns about existing conditions along Argenta Trail, noting that the roadway currently consists of one lane in each direction with narrow and deteriorated shoulders. Heavy truck traffic associated with the nearby UPS facility creates challenges for pedestrians and bicyclists and raises concerns about the safety impacts of additional traffic in the corridor. She added that she was unsure how those concerns could be addressed but wanted them to be recognized as part of the discussion. Schneider noted that the City's Comprehensive Plan anticipates future expansion of Argenta Trail, including the addition of another travel lane. The proposed plat includes dedication of the right-of-way needed for those future improvements and acknowledges that while expansion of the roadway is planned, it is not anticipated in the immediate future.

Commissioner Walsh inquired about the proposed rezoning to R-3A, noting that many of the surrounding properties are currently zoned Agricultural, and asked where the nearest existing R-3A property is located. Schneider stated that there is an R-3A property north of the site and clarified that many of the surrounding properties are guided for future R-3A zoning under the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed development is simply the first property in the area to move forward with development and rezoning, and that additional properties could eventually be rezoned similarly if they develop in accordance with the City's future land use guidance.

Chair Weber asked where the Joint Powers Agreement boundary is located and whether it follows Argenta Trail. Schneider stated that the Joint Powers Agreement boundary generally runs north and south near the eastern edge of the property, although he was not certain of the exact location.

Planning Manager Shay clarified that the Joint Powers Agreement boundary follows Argenta Trail, with the agreement ending on the east side of the roadway.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether the R-3 zoning district, rather than R-3A, would qualify under the Low-Medium Density Residential land use designation. Schneider explained that it would not and noted that a different zoning district would require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment because the zoning districts are tied to the density ranges established by the City's future land use guidance.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether R-3A is the least dense zoning district available for the proposed land use designation. Schneider explained that R-3A is the least dense multifamily zoning district and the only district that corresponds with the Low-Medium Density Residential designation, which allows four to eight units per acre. Lower- or higher-density zoning districts would not align with the property's land use guidance and would require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether an apartment building occupying only a portion of the site could satisfy the density requirements. Schneider explained that while density calculations may allow various housing types, the zoning code also contains building design standards, including a four-unit-per-building limit. He noted that this requirement helps prevent large apartment-style developments, although the applicant is requesting flexibility to allow six-unit buildings as part of the proposal.

Planning Manager Shay reiterated that Dakota County would not permit access to the site from Yankee Doodle Road because the property does not meet the County's access spacing requirements. Given the proximity of Argenta Trail and the site's limited frontage along Yankee Doodle Road, County staff indicated early in the review process that direct access would not be allowed. The entire area is guided for Low-Medium Density Residential development. Properties west of Argenta Trail currently have access to sewer and water service through the Joint Powers Agreement with Eagan, while areas east of Argenta Trail require future utility extensions from Inver Grove Heights. A significant investment would be needed to extend utilities south of Highway 55 and that the availability of utilities is one reason this property is among the first in the area to develop. The surrounding Agricultural zoning primarily serves as a holding designation until future development occurs.

Commissioner Gosell asked whether the addresses identified as 7925 and 7927 represent separate properties within the proposed development area. Schneider explained that the site is currently a single parcel. Multiple addresses can sometimes exist on a property for various reasons, although he was not aware of the specific reason for the two addresses associated with this parcel.

Commissioner Thomas requested clarification regarding utility service in the area. Shay clarified that utility service in the area is provided through a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Eagan. Under that agreement, Eagan provides sewer and water service to properties west of Argenta Trail, while properties east of Argenta Trail would require utility service from Inver Grove Heights. As a result, the only parcels currently served by urban utilities in this area are those located west of Argenta Trail.

Commissioner Walsh asked whether future extension of 80th Street East into the property to the west could create a dead-end street longer than the City's 500-foot maximum length. Schneider explained that it is difficult to answer without a future site plan for the adjacent property. Future development could include a turnaround or another street configuration to address the issue. If a longer cul-de-sac is ultimately proposed, the developer would be required to seek a Planned Unit Development flexibility request as part of that future approval process.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Schaefer, to accept correspondence into the record.

Ayes: 8 (Weber Abstained)

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Opening of Public Hearing

Haley Daily, Applicant, Pulte Homes, 1650 W. 82nd Street, Suite 300, Bloomington, stated that regarding the driveway easement, Pulte Homes has been working with the property owner for approximately a year to evaluate different options. As staff noted, the owner's existing physical driveway extends beyond the boundaries of the current easement. She explained that the proposal would establish a new easement that accurately reflects and encompasses the driveway as it exists today, formalizing the current situation and providing clarity for all parties involved. The proposal would not alter the driveway itself, and the driveway would not be impacted in any way.

Commissioner Schaefer noted that the concern was related to the easement, but that the resident had also raised several other issues, including requests for additional trees to provide privacy and other site-related concerns. She asked the applicant to discuss those concerns and explain how they were being addressed or mitigated through the proposed development.

Ms. Daily stated that a request for additional trees had been incorporated into the updated landscaping plan. The revised plan had been reviewed and was viewed favorably because the added plantings would provide additional screening. Another request involved documenting the existing driveway and conducting a preconstruction inspection of the home to ensure no damage occurred during construction, which the applicant also agreed to complete. The remaining concerns had been addressed through ongoing communication and assistance from City staff and indicated that the parties had reached a point where there was support for the proposed easement terms.

Ms. Daily acknowledged concerns regarding pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and stated that, in addition to the sidewalk proposed along the north side of the development, the site plan includes a trail connection to Yankee Doodle Road. The proposed switchback-style trail would provide safer pedestrian access to Yankee Doodle and improve connections to the broader trail network. She also addressed concerns related to traffic, noting that those issues had been raised during the neighborhood meeting. A trip generation memorandum was completed for the development, and while the project engineer was available to provide additional details, the analysis estimated approximately 22 new vehicle trips during the morning peak hour and 23 new trips during the afternoon peak hour. Most traffic was expected to travel east, with some vehicles traveling south and west.

Commissioner Wippermann questioned what price range was anticipated for the individual units.

Ms. Daily stated that the homes were expected to sell in the low \$400,000 range, although pricing could vary depending on the lot. She noted that some of the proposed townhomes would include basements, which was a newer product type for the developer. Approximately half of the units would be slab-on-grade, while others would have basements due to the site's grading conditions.

Commissioner Schaefer referenced the staff report, which indicated that there were limited options for configuring the site, and asked whether meeting the development standards would be difficult or impossible.

Ms. Daily explained that the site is constrained by its size, with only about eight net developable acres, and that the lowest point of the property is in the center where the stormwater pond is proposed. She stated that the design balances the need to meet density requirements while addressing site realities related to grading, utilities, and construction. The requested density was considered necessary for the project's viability, and extending the cul-de-sac approximately 100 feet will allow future access to property west of the site if it develops. The homes would not be located along both sides of the street for its entire length, which reduces the number of units that could otherwise be accommodated.

Commissioner Wippermann sought clarification regarding the number of six-unit buildings proposed, noting that the report indicated four of the nine buildings would contain six units.

Ms. Daily clarified that five of the nine buildings would be six-unit structures.

Commissioner Thomas asked about the impact if the City denied the six-unit buildings and required only four-unit buildings.

Ms. Daily responded that such a change would place the project in jeopardy because it would reduce the development by ten units, resulting in only 36 total units. While the exact scenario had not been analyzed, she stated the reduction would likely make the project financially infeasible. The proposed 46-unit development was viewed as being in the middle of the required density range at approximately 5.65 units per acre and below the maximum density allowed.

Commissioner Gosell asked whether the statement that the project could be jeopardized meant that the developer did not currently own the property and that the purchase was contingent on approval of the application.

Ms. Daily confirmed that the developer was under contract to purchase the property and had a designated approval period to secure approvals. If the necessary approvals were not obtained, the transaction would not proceed to closing.

Commissioner Schaefer noted that the site grading places the stormwater pond in the central low area and asked about the potential impact of runoff on the adjacent cemetery to the south, particularly given the request to allow nearly 50 percent impervious surface coverage.

Ms. Daily stated that all runoff generated by the development would be contained on-site and that the stormwater pond was designed to accommodate the additional impervious surface without creating adverse impacts.

Ben Palazzolo, Alliant Engineering, explained that the infiltration basin would not drain toward the cemetery. Instead, a storm sewer connection would route water from the pond to the existing storm sewer system along Yankee Doodle Road, subject to coordination with Dakota County. He noted that work with City staff had focused on ensuring compliance with stormwater requirements in the northwest drainage area. The only runoff expected to reach the cemetery would be from land south

of 80th Street East, and that runoff would be significantly less in both volume and rate than what currently drains toward the cemetery.

Commissioner Johnson asked whether the applicant had heard from the resident at 7923 Argenta Trail.

Ms. Daily stated that discussions had taken place with the resident, including at the neighborhood meeting, and that no concerns regarding the proposal had been expressed.

Kassandra Fries, 7920 Alberta Way, stated that she opposed the proposed development, citing concerns about preserving the area's rural character, green space, and large-lot residential setting. The landscape and open space were major reasons her family chose to live there and expressed concern about the requested flexibility provisions, including impervious surface and tree mitigation exceptions. The proposed density would be a significant change from the existing development pattern and questioned whether making the project financially viable should take precedence over the interests of current residents. She also raised concerns about increased traffic and pedestrian safety on Alberta Way and Argenta Trail, noting that the area already experiences through traffic. Many residents in the area shop in nearby Egan, which could limit the economic benefit to Inver Grove Heights. She concluded by urging the Commission to consider the impacts on existing residents, noting that many neighbors share her concerns and plan to participate in future discussions.

Grant Rabuse, 7940 Alberta Way, stated that he has lived adjacent to the property since 1985 and recalled that the City's long-standing vision for the area focused on rolling hills, large lots, horse farms, and a rural atmosphere. He urged the City to maintain that vision by keeping the area as large-lot residential and expressed concerns about potential infrastructure costs for nearby landowners and the impact of light pollution on the character of the neighborhood.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Walsh questioned whether the estimate of 23 vehicles during the peak hour accurately reflected morning traffic from the proposed townhomes, noting that her cul-de-sac has five homes and at least eight cars leave each morning.

Mr. Palazzolo explained that the estimate applied only to the peak hour, with 17 vehicles expected to leave the development and five vehicles expected to enter during the morning peak period. He added that the development was estimated to generate 302 total vehicle trips over the course of a full day.

Commissioner Walsh asked how the trip estimates were calculated.

Mr. Palazzolo explained that the estimates were derived from the ITE Trip Generation Manual, a resource used by traffic engineers and updated every two to three years. He said the calculations are based on the proposed housing type and the number of units, which are used to estimate the number of vehicle trips generated by the development.

Commissioner Hunting stated that she had reviewed the traffic study more closely and noted that it indicated a significant portion of buyers for this type of townhome development are often empty nesters. She asked whether that demographic contributed to the lower traffic projections because many residents may not follow a traditional rush-hour work schedule.

Ms. Daily explained that the traffic study comments were based on the demographics typically seen among buyers of the developer's townhomes. Approximately 30 percent of buyers are empty nesters looking to downsize while remaining in the area and eliminating responsibilities such as snow removal, lawn care, and exterior maintenance. Other buyers are generally couples or young families purchasing their first home. She agreed that the presence of more empty nesters without traditional nine-to-five work schedules could contribute to lower peak-hour traffic volumes.

Commissioner Schaefer noted that a member of the public had raised concerns regarding light pollution and asked for additional information about the proposed lighting. She commented that the area is currently very dark, with minimal lighting beyond the intersection of Argenta Trail and Alverno Avenue, and that surrounding uses consist primarily of horse farms, large lots, and homes with very limited exterior lighting.

Ms. Daily stated that the development would comply with all City lighting requirements and utility provider standards. She noted that newer streetlights are generally designed to direct light downward, although the final lighting plan would depend on City requirements and utility standards. The development would adhere to all applicable lighting regulations.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether resident input is considered when attempting to mitigate light pollution and create a transition between the development and surrounding properties.

Ms. Daily responded that she would defer to City staff regarding specific lighting policies and requirements, as she was not familiar with the exact standards or fixture counts that would be required.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the development would be required to comply with the City's lighting Ordinance, which limits illumination levels at property lines and streets. The ordinance requires lighting to not exceed one foot-candle when measured from the centerline of a street and not exceed 0.4 foot-candles at adjacent residential property lines. These standards apply to all development within the City.

Commissioner Schaefer inquired as to whether staff knew the illumination level of the existing light located at the corner of Argenta Trail and 82nd Street. Shay stated that he could not provide information on a specific location without taking an actual meter reading.

Commissioner Wippermann stated that his primary concern was the requested exception allowing six-unit buildings instead of four-unit buildings. He believed the change would negatively affect the character of the neighborhood and indicated he would not support the request.

Chair Weber questioned how many units had been approved in the townhome development near Cahill. Shay responded that the most recent townhome project reviewed by the Commission was the Vikings Lakes development near Argenta Trail and 65th Street, where all the buildings consisted of six units.

Commissioner Schaefer commented that the Northwest Area has different requirements than that development. Shay stated that both developments are located within the same Overlay District and are subject to the Northwest Area Overlay standards.

Commissioner Gosell stated that he generally supported the application and felt it was a well-prepared proposal, but shared concerns raised by residents. He questioned granting the requested flexibility for six-unit buildings when the developer was only under contract to purchase one property and additional surrounding parcels were not part of the proposal. He felt the exception would make more sense if a larger portion of the area were being developed together.

Commissioner Thomas echoed concerns regarding traffic, density, tree mitigation, and issues raised by nearby residents. He stated that he was not comfortable supporting the proposal and wondered whether alternative development options were available.

Schneider noted that State law establishes deadlines for approving or denying land use applications. The applicant had already granted a 30-day extension to allow additional review of stormwater issues, but no further extension would be available. He clarified that while the Commission was not required to approve the application, continuing the matter was not a viable option because failure to act within the statutory timeline would result in automatic approval.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the Commission typically has three options when considering a land use application: approval, denial, or continuation. However, due to the statutory timeline associated with this application, a continuation was not available, leaving only recommendations of approval or denial.

Chair Weber reminded the Commission that its role is specifically to evaluate land use matters and make recommendations based on those considerations.

Commissioner Thomas asked whether the project could still be approved if the Commission recommended denial. Shay clarified that automatic approval only occurs if the City fails to act within the required timeframe. Because the application would proceed to the City Council before that deadline, the normal approval and denial process would remain in place.

Community Development Director Ziemer addressed comments regarding the desire to include additional properties in the development. He explained that while a larger development area could potentially address some concerns, the City cannot require developers to acquire neighboring properties and must evaluate the application based on the proposal currently before it. He noted that the property has long been guided for low-medium density residential use under the Comprehensive Plan, and applications are evaluated based on whether they meet the applicable density and zoning requirements. Surrounding property owners are not obligated to redevelop their land and may continue using their properties as they currently exist indefinitely. The fact that nearby land is guided for low-medium density residential use does not require those properties to redevelop in the future. Regarding tree preservation concerns, he stated that the Northwest Area Overlay contains challenging standards that can be difficult to satisfy on some properties. When all requirements cannot be met, City regulations allow financial contributions that can be used for tree planting and enhancements in parks and other public areas. Development costs, site constraints, and market considerations all influence project design decisions. Factors such as the proposed street layout, which includes frontage without homes on one side, add costs that developers must account for when determining density and overall project feasibility. He acknowledged that the project presents challenges but stated that staff believed the requested flexibility was reasonable and ultimately left the recommendation decision to the Commission.

Commissioner Hunting stated that she agreed with many of the points raised by Director Ziemer. As someone who lives on a large, heavily wooded lot, she understood the concerns expressed by nearby residents about potential changes to the area. She noted that properties will remain unchanged unless owners choose to sell and redevelop them. Because the property owner had elected to sell and the site is guided for the proposed use, she indicated that she would support the project. She also stated that the difference between four-unit and six-unit townhome buildings would not significantly change the character of the development in her view.

Commissioner Gosell asked whether the development would still meet the minimum density requirements if the requested Planned Unit Development flexibility allowing six-unit buildings was denied and all buildings were limited to four units. Schneider responded that eliminating 10 units would reduce the density to approximately 4.4 units per acre, which would still meet the minimum density requirement but would be at the very bottom of the allowed range.

Commissioner Gosell stated that he felt the proposal was attempting to fit a development onto a site that was not yet ready for it. He expressed concern that the request for six-unit buildings instead of four-unit buildings suggested the site required exceptions to achieve the proposed density. While additional development could occur in the future if neighboring properties were sold, he did not believe the current parcel was ready for that level of development at this time.

Ms. Daily suggested the possibility of working with staff to obtain an extension and potentially table the application to a future meeting date to allow additional time for internal discussions.

Chair Weber responded that the Commission was still gauging its position on the proposal. He noted that regardless of the Commission's recommendation, the City Council would have an opportunity to consider the application and would likely hear additional public comments from residents at that meeting.

Schneider stated that he would recommend tabling the application.

Commissioner Hunting indicated that if the applicant was willing to pursue that option, she believed tabling the matter would be a good idea. Schneider noted that any extension would need to be formally granted by the applicant, which he assumed could be done, but that requirement was the reason for his hesitation.

Community Development Director Ziemer offered a procedural recommendation, stating that the Commission should still forward a recommendation to the City Council to remain within the statutory timeline. He explained that if the applicant later chose to grant an extension and request a tabling of the item, the Council could send the application back to the Commission for further review. This approach would preserve the timeline while allowing the applicant additional time to consider options. He added that minor revisions could potentially proceed directly to the Council, but substantive changes, such as modifications to the plat, would require the application to return to the Commission.

Motion by Schaefer, Second by Walsh, to Deny the Rezoning, Preliminary Plat and Preliminary PUD request at 7927 Argenta trail for 46 townhome units.

Ayes: 6 (Weber Abstained)

Nays: 2 (Hellam, Hunting) Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on June 22, 2026.

8. REGULAR BUSINESS

None.

9. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS

Planning Manager Shay explained that he typically provides an update at each meeting on applications that were considered at the previous Planning Commission meeting. He noted that there had been two items on the prior agenda, one of which had been tabled. The other item was the Builders Lot Group proposal for 33 single-family homes and a 196-unit apartment building. That application proceeded to the City Council at the end of May and was approved. He added that the approval completed the first phase of the process and that the applicant would need to return to the Planning Commission in the future with a final plat and final Planned Unit Development application.

10. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tammy Greenlee, Recording Secretary.