

**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**

**February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Completed by: Sue Bertrand, P&Z Staff

Site visits completed by Adam Ossefoort and Andy Watland on 2/3/2026

Meeting attended by board members: Vice Chair Ken Hovet, Lloyd Graves, Roger Hendrickson, Andy Watland, alternate George Sutton and Commissioner Tim Denny.

Staff members: Adam Ossefoort and Sue Bertrand

Other members of the public: Sign-in Sheet is available for viewing upon request.

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited as a collective group.

Introduction of the staff and board members, by Ken.

Roger motioned to have the agenda approved as presented. Lloyd seconded the motion. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

Lloyd motioned to have the January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026 meeting minutes approved. Roger seconded. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

**AGENDA ITEM 1: Sacred Heart Addition-Section 07, Hartford Township, Site Address: 708 8<sup>th</sup> St. W., Browerville, MN 56438 PID: 12-0007400**

1. Request to create a +/- two-acre, one lot plat, for a convent cemetery in Residential-2 Zoning District.

Sisters Jean Noel Goldade, Sister Mary Gemma, Sister Mary Athansius and Brad Nyberg from Nyberg Surveying were present as the applicants. Sister Mary Gemma explained they would like to have permission to have a small cemetery attached to their religious house for the Sisters in their community for whenever God calls them to eternity. They are looking at having about 15 to 20 graves, which is not much. They have been in Browerville for about 36 years and not had one death. Their neighbor Dave Benning has graciously offered them some acreage of his property to accommodate their need for a cemetery. This property is in Hartford township. The land is surrounded by trees, and eventually they will seclude it even more with an evergreen hedge.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. The staff report is available for viewing upon request in the Planning & Zoning Office.

**Recommendation:**

A motion to recommend approval to the County Board of Commissioners with the following conditions:

**Proposed Conditions:**

1. Applicant shall remain compliant with applicable local, state or federal regulations related to operation of the cemetery.
2. Declare a cemetery official and an alternate that will be responsible for following state rules and provide contact information to the County to be recorded with the final plat.

3. Maintain a list of individuals buried and exact location within the cemetery.
4. Cemetery plot must be completely fenced off with boundaries clearly identified. All burial sites must remain inside of the fenced area.
5. Cemetery must be established and maintained in compliance with MN Statutes Chapter 307.

On Site Visit Report by: Andy Watland and he went through his report. This may be viewed in full, upon request at the Planning and Zoning office.

Correspondence received: None

Public comment:

Marty Host, stated he and his wife own the home and the land directly north of the proposed site. Built their house back in 2016, moved their family there to raise their two sons. Paid a pretty penny to put the house there and they are tax paying residents. They are here to oppose the proposal. Sisters are very good neighbors, hardworking, polite neighbors. He does not doubt they would take very good care of the cemetery, because their property is very well maintained. Bottom line is they really don't want a cemetery next to their home. He understands cemeteries are a necessity and if the cemetery had been there prior to them building their home, they would be fine with it, as he would have known the cemetery was there and it would have been his choice whether they would build a home or not. Now, they have a home there, thus they are opposing this. Back in the fall in 2024 the Sisters had come to his house, and they had talked about a cemetery, after the City of Browerville did not allow a cemetery in their compound. At that time, they had aspirations of purchasing the Kern home and buying a half-acre from Dave Benning. It did not bother him at that time, as it was not bordering his property and he couldn't see it. As a neighbor to a cemetery, he believes it will influence the value and the future long-term marketability of his property. If he was looking for a home, he would not want to purchase property next to a cemetery, that is his choice. Ultimately, they have a beautiful home, and it is going to take the right buyer to purchase the home from them someday. The congregation has been there for over 30 years, and they have been good people. They are proposing 15 to 20 plots, and once approved, he understands it will be for the Sisters only, but that is not to say they couldn't bury the priests or members of the congregation. So, they are looking at 20 plots, then 40, then however many more they need. At this time, the Church seems very strong. They have good turnouts for their services, but he also has a sense of history, too. In this County, there are a number of cemeteries dotted throughout, that at one time they were a part of somebody's parish (Natavia, Ward township on County 21, the Valley cemetery on County 16, Zion Lutheran out on 14 and one down in Ward Springs). He imagines those parishes never thought they would dissolve or move on either. He believes the Sisters will be here in 25 years and maybe even 50, but if the parish does not work out, who takes care of the cemetery? He stated history tells us the smaller congregations end up moving on, and this is something to think about. To ask your neighbor to live next to a cemetery is a "big ask". He stated he has a lot of money invested into his property, and one day he may develop, this limits what he could potentially sell a piece of property for. May not bother some, but it does him and others, as well. He stated it is difficult to speak up here against them, because they are good people, but he also has to watch out for his interest, his family's and the community's interest. There have been a number of people who have called him or stopped by his office and do not want a cemetery there either. The city of Browerville has already turned them down. Basically, if you set the precedent of allowing a cemetery in the city, anyone can apply for one. If approved, he would appreciate natural boundaries instead of a chain-link fence. Natural like your Arborvitae that you have, are terrific. He can't fight everything. He

sees the conditions, but being the property owner nearest to, other than the Kerns, that are most affected by it, he is here to oppose.

Ken reminded the public to keep it under 3 minutes.

Denise Gaida, County official, Auditor Treasurer, but tonight here as a citizen of Hartford Township, and they got the notification on this because they own property near, her concern is much like Marty's. What is going to happen in Hartford if you allow this. She has a two-acre parcel right next to her land. What if she comes to you at the end of Killdeer Drive cul-de-sac and say she wants her vacant lot to be a cemetery? Are you going to allow that? Is it, every time someone comes and asks, they are going to get their own little cemetery? She stated her cul-de-sac area is more of a residential part of town, but she is in Hartford township. The other aspect is Hartford township okay with continually losing revenue? This parcel will now become exempt. What that land is as residential being paid in taxes, is part of your tax base in Hartford. Now, you take that away and you keep doing that, it makes generated revenue in your Hartford township you need to sustain your township on less and less and less. She agrees with Marty, she has had other people along that road and actually a nephew that lives across from the rectory or the parish, who couldn't be here tonight, but sent several messages to Denise, he wouldn't appreciate this because he looks to the North, enjoys the Church, the nuns, it's not that, they are good people. He is wondering about his view, and will he have to see that? His property taxes went up so much this year in market value, he wants to know if his market value is going to go down now, to offset the taxes. How is this going to affect the marketability of his home when *he* wants to go sell? They just moved in a couple of years ago. He had quite the concerns and asked her to voice them here for him. She agreed to. She stated she is on the same grounds as Marty and would oppose this.

Bob Geraets, neighbor to the Sisters on the East side and asked on the State Statute as far as burials, if they will be using vaults? Secondly, if a Sister does pass away, are they going to be using a funeral home, or are they taking care of the embalment themselves? Are they doing a green burial? Last question or concern, it is awful close the aquifer that Browerville draws its water from. That would be his concern. Not sure these questions have been presented before and answered.

Karen Jonckowski, lives across the street from the convent or the novitiate and doesn't mind having the nuns across the street from them but she doesn't feel a cemetery is something they want in her neighborhood. Her concern, like Bob's, are they going to go through the state statutes, so the burials are done correctly? She feels there is other land around Browerville they could use for a cemetery. She is opposed to it.

Board discussion:

Andy asked if we have any responses from the applicant for the questions on the type of burial and embalming?

Ken stated one of the conditions states: must follow all Federal, State and local laws and that dictates how burials are conducted. Ken stated the board is not an expert on burying bodies but feels the State and the Feds are.

George asked if the two-acre bit of this is being parceled off from the larger parcel?

Nyberg stated it is going to be a two-step process. The County is making them plat it first, so they can put it in their name, then come back with the cemetery plat. The cemetery plat is going to show where each grave site is going to be. The area is going to be very small as he pictures it to be approximately the size of this room, pretty much in the middle of the two acres. As you know, the East side is heavy trees and the NE side is also heavy trees and they will plant a lot more shrubbery. This isn't like the entire two acres is going to be scattered with graves, this is just a small area.

George asked if these two acres are being gifted?

Sisters, they are purchasing it.

Andy stated there is a right of way across the woods. Stated he and Adam had a tough time seeing it, and it's kind of on a dead-end road, they had to walk through the woods and hunt to where it was, so as far as an eyesore, there is little chance of that. There are trees planted all over, at least a couple of acres, but because the public has raised those concerns...

Ken, so you don't feel it will be visible by anybody, anywhere?

Andy, he and Adam knew where it was supposed to be and they had to go on an excursion through the woods to figure out where it was going to be. It's not going to be very visible. Probably more hidden in the summer with more foliage on the different types of trees.

Ken, so, from those houses on the diagram up there, you think no-one will be able to see it?

Andy stated he and Adam parked on the road and had trouble seeing through there. He is sure if you looked and noticed it, you could see it but doesn't think there will be extravagant monuments that are twenty feet high either. Pretty modest.

Sister Mary Athansius stated the entrance will be curved to hide anything you could see from the entrance. Not directly straight from St. John's Avenue.

Roger, the intention will be the burial sites will be in the middle, and don't anticipate taking out any of the trees that are around there?

Sister Mary Athansius, correct.

Roger, there is an opening on the North side you can see a little bit of an opening through there...

Nyberg, but not the house, that would be screened.

Andy stated it is hard to tell, but there's a pretty good hill there.

Roger asked if the State requires them to use vaults?

Adam stated he did not have that information off the top of his head. Nor would that necessarily be something that we would regulate, the Statute would dictate that.

Roger mentioned talking about worrying about the aquifer, he stated in Germany you rent your burial plot for 35 years and after that, it's up for rent again. They are not using any kind of containers for the body, cramped for space.

Ken, they've done that for centuries, but not the culture here.

Lloyd, you don't want to use the Browerville cemetery?

Sister Mary Athansius, no, they would like it next to their novitiate. Once again, it is not a parish, they are completely independent from Christ the King, they are their own non-profit Catholic organization. It will always be a smaller number. They have been there for over 30 years now and have the intention of staying in Browerville. It is kind of their headquarters of their religious organization, and all their paperwork and everything is in Minnesota. They don't really want to move and start all that process over again. That is why they wanted to go ahead with the cemetery, as they already made that decision now, they want to remain in Browerville.

Tim asked about condition # 4, is there a reason they want it completely fenced off or could we put a living fence or vegetative screening, or do we have to have it fenced?

Adam, the first four were based on past cemeteries, so if we need to edit that in any way...

George stated a gentleman mentioned a certain kind of fence he didn't like, could we be more specific if we chose to? Would that be helpful?

Adam stated we don't even have to require a fence, we could request vegetative screening on all four sides, in lieu of a fence if we wanted to. The statute still requires a monument on the corners to identify the boundary in that respect, but if there is a better way of delineating that boundary with vegetative screening vs a fence...

George stated it seems like vegetative screening would be more attractive and probably longer lasting. If we choose to designate that, then Arborvitae is something synonymous with a cemetery plot.

Brad stated the fence would be just around the grave sites. So, when he said perhaps half the size of this room, the fence would be fifteen to twenty feet on the outside of the gravesites. We are talking  $\frac{3}{4}$  the size of the room would be fenced in. He stated he thinks it's important to have a fence, so animals are not getting in there and what not. It's very common for cemeteries to be fenced in.

Sister Mary Athansius, at the same time, around the actual border of the property, they will add a cloister of shrubs around the whole area, so you would have that blocking any vision of the cemetery. We would have the fence on the inside.

Ken, that is something you want to do around the perimeter of the property?

Sister Mary Athansius, we already have a live hedge around the front and the sides. It is even a part of their rules. They have a cloistered area, and they like it very private for themselves, as well.

Adam clarified a fence designating the area around the burial sites and vegetative screening around the entirety of the property.

George asked if they were alright with making that a condition?

Sisters, yes, they will do that anyway.

Andy stated if it is anything like what is on the East side, it is very tight and you cannot see through those.

More discussion on the height of vegetation and agreed minimum of 6 feet at maturity.

Andy motioned to approve with the amended conditions, Roger seconded.

1. Applicant shall remain compliant with applicable local, state or federal regulations related to operation of the cemetery.
2. Declare a cemetery official and an alternate that will be responsible for following state rules and provide contact information to the County to be recorded with the final plat.
3. Maintain a list of individuals buried and exact location within the cemetery.
4. Cemetery plot must be completely fenced off with boundaries clearly identified. All burial sites must remain inside of the fenced area.
5. Establishment of vegetative screening around the entire property. Screening shall be no less than 6' in height at maturity.
6. Cemetery must be established and maintained in compliance with MN Statutes Chapter 307.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

Board member	Vote (yes or no)
George	Yes
Roger Hendrickson	Yes
Lloyd Graves	Yes
Andy Watland	Yes
Ken Hovet	Yes

Motion carried. Ken noted the application will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: Adam Froseth-Section 22, Kandota Township, Site Address: 11413 US HWY 71, MN 56378 PID: 12-0007400**

2. Request to create a +/- two-acre, one lot plat, for a convent cemetery in Residential-2 Zoning District.

Adam Froseth was present as the applicant, stated he would like to install a ground mount solar system.

Staff Findings: Adam read through the staff report. The staff report is available for viewing upon request in the Planning & Zoning Office.

**Recommendation:**

A motion to recommend approval to the County Board of Commissioners with the following conditions:

**Proposed Conditions:**

1. Applicant must obtain permitting and/or licensing from additional governmental agencies as necessary.
2. Submission of Interconnection Agreement with the electric service provider prior to issuance of a land use permit.
3. Construction of additional solar arrays shall require the review of the Planning Commission.

Correspondence received: None

Public comment: None

On Site Visit Report by: Andy, and he went through his site report. This report may be viewed, in full, upon request at the Planning and Zoning office.

Board discussion:

Roger asked if they moved into the house yet?

Froseth, yes.

Roger stated he did not think it could be viewed from the lake due to the slope, he knows what it is like down there as many years ago he had to tow a car up the icy hill from the lake.

Ken stated the application says it will be more than 120%. Do you know how much more it will be?

Froseth, no, he does not.

Roger stated they must know it works good as his dad has two already and they are putting in more.

Ken asked for screening along the side that will be visible, and asked if that was acceptable?

Froseth, yes.

Ken suggested a condition similar to the cemetery, minimum 6' at maturity.

Andy thought it should be evergreens.

Froseth stated he his planning two rows of evergreens.

Ken, how big is the footprint?

Froseth, 13' x 145'.

Andy, 85' from the line.

George motioned to approve as proposed recommended by staff, Roger seconded.

Conditions:

1. Applicant must obtain permitting and/or licensing from additional governmental agencies as necessary.
2. Submission of Interconnection Agreement with the electric service provider prior to issuance of a land use permit.
3. Construction of additional solar arrays shall require the review of the Planning Commission.
4. Establishment of vegetative screening along the east property line to provide screening from the public roadway. Screening shall be no less than 6' in height at maturity.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

Board member	Vote (yes or no)
George	Yes
Roger Hendrickson	Yes
Lloyd Graves	Yes
Andy Watland	Yes
Ken Hovet	Yes

Motion carried. Ken noted the application will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: Amendments to Article XII of the Planning and Zoning Ordinance- Regulation on Cannabis Businesses**

Adam went through the proposed amendments highlighted in red listed in his Staff report. This report may be viewed in full at the planning and zoning office, upon request.

Correspondence: none

Ken stated this is a little different than a regular application for CUP, so he will allow questions and answers but to please limit to 3 minutes each, and asked them to keep points succinct.

Allen Halbersma, Moran township, familiar with a building application in his township. He encouraged the proposed changes. One of the big issues is security. Now that it is going to commercial, it is going to be closer to Long Prairie, but is still concerned for cities like Browerville, Clarissa and Eagle Bend as the commercial area in not a 24-7 patrol area. He is wondering if we could require the security systems to be handled through a third party directly linked to the Sherriff's department, so they can be notified quicker and a response can be right away.

Ken reminded all we have no jurisdiction inside city limits.

Allen was talking about commercial zoned area outside city limits. If in AF-1 and you have a commercial business, could that be turned into Commercial Zoning?

Adam stated the County may amend the zoning map. Landowners can apply to amend the zoning districts, then the County Board still makes that decision, but there are commercial uses that are allowed in the Agricultural zones. That is why you see these CUP's come through because it has been identified as a conditional use that is allowed if you get that right permitting. Just because it is not a commercial zone, doesn't mean it does not allow commercial activities.

Allen asked so this type of operation can still get permission?

Adam, no, that is what we are restricting. We are saying this particular use is not a conditional use in those other zones. It is restricted just to the commercial zones.

Allen, just wanted to make sure that people don't buy a chunk of property and then try and turn it into commercial and put a building up.

Adam stated that reality does exist, however, the Planning Commission and the County Board would have to determine if it is beneficial to the County, as a whole, to amend that zoning map in that way and also, is it a spot zone? If someone owns a piece of property in the middle of Agricultural zone and surrounded by Agricultural zone and asks to rezone to commercial in the center of that, it is highly unlikely to be granted. Our Comp Plan has clear language to discourage spot zoning. We have that support to deny things like that.

Wally Zastrow Long Prairie town board. He questioned the language on application fees and registration fees. Why are we not charging an application fee? Why are we not going to charge a fee for a cannabis business? He just did a two and half acre split and was charged a \$100.00 fee. Thinks there should be a \$500.00 fee before you start the application process.

Adam stated the statute restricts us from doing that. It is out of our control. Statute also sets limitations on the initial and renewal fees of these retail registrations, and we have set it at the cap. Our hands are tied in that respect. What Wally is reading from, part C, is specific to retail sites. If they are doing a cultivation only, using it as an example, they would still pay the CUP fees and go through the same process to get the permit, but there actually wouldn't be a registration requirement. The registration requirement is specific to retail cannabis stores.

George questioned the signage, how can this business exist at all if there is no way to identify what it is?

Adam, not restricting a business sign, and having a name on your storefront. What this is restricting is putting an old car alongside the road or having movable signs. We do not want them advertising a cultivation site. We do not want to draw attention to those sites.

George stated a cultivation site does not have to attract customers unless they are together with retail which is rare. If it is a retail business, you want them to have a sign and grow as a business and raise taxes for the County and you want people to find it. The language should be cleared up from how it is written.

Andy brought up just like you can advertise the bar and the distillery, but the cannabis cannot advertise the cultivation site. He added you would want to hide a cultivation business as much as possible, as they are prone to security issues. It is a controlled substance.

Ken asked Adam where the impetus on restriction for AF-1 and AF-2 come from?

Adam explained based on the feedback from public and Commissioners so far.

Eric Brichacek, why would retail low potency edibles not be confined to a commercial zone?

Adam, essentially, they were legal and operating before the statute came out. They are sold at every gas station and liquor store. We would need legal assistance to change that, if we have the opportunity to restrict them to commercial zones. Now, those that are operating may be allowed to continue to operate, but any future would be subject to the new language.

Brichacek, there should be exorbitant fees. Through the roof. Cannabis is federally controlled. We need to put a stop to this. It stops here and at home.

Adam, there are caps from the statute on the initial registration and renewal fees.

Andy stated there is language we cannot prohibit cannabis businesses. A creative County can say we cannot prohibit it, but we can charge \$1,000,000 for the registration fee and probably why that state language is there.

Discussion on allowed retail businesses.

Andy asked Adam if we have a security and lighting plan?

Adam stated if we would like to amend the security plan to require the system to be directly connected to alert law enforcement, it is definitely something he would need legal counsel on and talk to law enforcement about. He can certainly do that, but we would be unable to move forward with this tonight.

Tim asked Adam if we need to state compliance checks must be done on growing facilities, as well as retail.

Adam stated it is not identified in our ordinance now that we conduct compliance inspections, he believes the state has some sort of inspection process. He can have an answer to that, too.

Roger agreed with the alarm alerting Sheriffs' office directly.

Roger moved to table for more research, Andy seconded.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Vote (yes or no)</b>
George	Yes
Roger Hendrickson	Yes
Lloyd Graves	Yes
Andy Watland	Yes
Ken Hovet	Yes

Motion carried.

Roger motioned to adjourn, Andy seconded, voice vote, no dissention heard. Motion carried and February Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM.