



Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

1408 Lake Street South
Forest Lake, MN 55025
www.ci.forest-lake.mn.us

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

6:00 PM

City Center - Council Chamber

[City of Forest Lake - Livestream and Recorded Meetings](#)

1. Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Girard	Commission Chair	Absent	
Susan Young	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Andy Aplikowski	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Don Stehler	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Corey Goodwin	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Jesse Wagner	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Tim Stender	Vice Chair	Present	

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approve the Agenda

No comments on the Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Approve the Agenda as presented.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Stehler. Motion carried 6-0.

5. Open Forum – Citizen Petitions, Requests, and Concerns

*The Open Forum is available for residents to express personal opinions for any item of business.
Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes.*

None.

6. Consent Agenda Considerations (Action Items)*

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from March 25, 2026

No comments on the Consent Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Item 6.a.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Young. Motion carried 6-0.

7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)



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a. Variance and Preliminary Plat – Forest View Estates – 03.032.21.43.0001

i. Public Hearing

ii. Final Action for Variance – Resolution No. 04-08-26-01

iii. Recommendation for City Council for Preliminary Plat

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore stated that the variance and preliminary plat attracted comments from nearby residents because of traffic and access. He reviewed the preliminary plat and variance request for Forest View Estates and noted that the development was consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning standards, aside from the cul-de-sac length. He summarized the long planning history and said that the site was originally proposed in 1978, but the development was delayed because of sewer concerns. He discussed the site constraints and access limitations, including the wetland/buffer constraints, access limitations, and an adjacent park. He explained the decision framework for the item.

Commissioner Stehler requested an explanation of the process the Planning Commission must follow and the appeal process to the City Council. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that the variance was an approval and that the preliminary plat was a recommendation to the City Council. He said any interested party could appeal the decisions to the City Council.

Jaren Johnson, 21704 Bay Drive, said he was not trying to slam in a project of higher density, but he thought they would be nice houses of lower density than what they could apply for. He expressed a desire to be friends with the neighbors.

Commissioner Young asked if he knew the history of the development attempts at the property. Mr. Johnson responded that he knew a bit of the history and said it was a bigger issue than a new development around the corner.

Commissioner Young asked about examples. Mr. Johnson responded that the Forest Hills Preserve was an example. He commented that the proposal was not abnormal for Forest Lake, and it was approved years ago. He thought they were doing the right thing by not getting maximum density and increasing traffic.

Commissioner Wagner asked about the price point for the houses. Mr. Johnson answered that he was looking at \$700,000 to \$1 million for the price point for the lot and home. He commented that he wanted to build nice houses.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:18 p.m.

Andrew Wolf, 23073 Hearth Avenue North, expressed concerns about safety and the increase in vehicles. He said any development in this area would have an impact on the watershed, so flooding was also a concern. He requested that the Planning Commission not have any new assessments on



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the existing homes in the area. He suggested that they should build an access road through Kulenkamp Park.

Chad Bloomberg, 7610 231st Street North, discussed an important policy concern since development policies exist for safe growth and development. He requested that they consider the streetlight and visibility, since there was only one streetlight near the edge of his property. He discussed the fire and emergency access, since a longer cul-de-sac would mean a longer distance for safety personnel. He discussed a physical measure to help reduce average speeds and impact traffic, at the cost of the developer. He suggested a third party complete a traffic study. He asked if the lots would have septic or would be tapped into the sewer, and if they would have additional capacity to take on the additional sewage.

Community Development Director Wittman clarified that the existing infrastructure had sufficient capacity for the additional homes, and they would tie into the existing system.

Mr. Bloomberg asked them to look at other examples offered up by Jaren Johnson to have real data for the examples.

David Kulenkamp, 23170 Hilo Avenue, said he agreed with Mr. Bloomberg's comments. He asked about the sewer system that was installed, likely when it was first proposed. He asked if it still had the capacity not to crack or be damaged so many years later. He discussed an example of the development of Dellwood in White Bear Lake, where the small lake began to drain as homes started to be built. He would hate to have anything similar in this location. He said that the original proposal showed an additional entrance with the blue roads, but the cul-de-sac was the variance they were requesting. He commented that the additional exits took care of these concerns and that the contractor should reconsider additional access roads.

Jennifer Vanderbosch Stary stated that she was here on behalf of her parents, Kate and Gary Vanderbosch, from 23070 Hilo Court North. She said that the Planning Commission had to find all six of the elements to approve the variance request, and she believed that three of the items failed. She stated that the property had been owned by the Muske family for 40 to 50 years. She reviewed the history of the property development attempts and said that the board previously denied a variance request for an increase in cul-de-sac length because of the traffic and public safety concerns pending a connection to 235th. She said that nothing had changed since the original 1997 proposal, other than the number of homes. She stated that the Vicks and Windbergs had not agreed to develop their land to extend roads, and those conditions had not changed. She asked what future development would resolve the access concerns. She commented that only one element had to fail, and the variance could not be granted. She said that the hardship had to not be created by the applicant, but the Muske family has owned the property for almost 50 years. She said it was within a reasonable standard that the original subdivisions could have been platted differently to allow for



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the development of the third subdivision, so it was a result of the owner's own actions. She discussed the previous concerns discussed by Commissioner Young about safety in June 2025. She commented that Commissioner Young previously expressed concerns with nearby farmland that was brush-prone and would feel more comfortable with an additional gravel access road. Ms. Vanderbosch Stary said that the nearby property owners had not agreed to sell or allow for a road to be developed on their property.

Laurie Knoll, 23053 Henna Avenue, said that some of her concerns had been addressed. She asked how long the building of the twenty homes would take and how many years trucks would drive past their homes to get to the access. She asked what the new homes would do to their property taxes, as her home was not worth \$600,000.

Catherine Jaqua, 23161 Hilo Avenue North, and Melissa Felland, 23130 Hilo Avenue North, voiced agreement with the safety concerns. Ms. Felland referenced an email that she sent to the Planning Commission about safety concerns related to the evacuation under an armed standoff situation, and that another access in the neighborhood would be necessary. She encouraged them to reference the email for additional information. She commented that she was told Hilo Avenue would go through, but it has not. She said that the in-and-out issue was a big concern.

Brad Jacobsen, 23230 Hilo Avenue North, said he sent an email to the Planning Commission. They moved to Forest Lake from St. Paul because of the neighborhood. He asked if the developer owned the parcel. He thought that the owner of the parcel thought that a Planning Commission in the future would allow for a variance to develop the property. He said that building twenty homes in the area that they were proposing would fundamentally change the entire neighborhood, with the increased population and traffic. He stated that if the development were built, the recommendation would carry a political overtone.

Jay Jennen, 23033 Henna Avenue North, said he has little kids who play outside. He often sees multiple cars on Henna Avenue that do not always slow down for children playing. He said the property had multiple variance requests that were rejected. He also talked about health, welfare, and safety. He commented that if residents had been in the area for a long time, that speaks to the welfare of the community, and it could change the dynamics. He stated that this request had been rejected before, with an additional road in the plan, but they were now seeking a variance to get around the regulations. He said if the property could develop properly without a variance, it would be acceptable.

Mike Anderson, 7570 231st Street North, commented that he has kids, and he has tried to get traffic to slow down. He stated that the Planning Commission was trying to break rules to jam more houses into the location. He requested that the developer build more roads and additional sewer. He said if the current sewer would fail, the current residents would deal with the issues. He said his basement



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flooded, and he has two sump pumps. He asked the developer to build the road and sewer before building houses. He suggested installing speed bumps and additional speed limit signs to manage the speeds. He said that traffic would drive on 233rd to avoid Dead Man's Corner on 231st.

Luke Milanovich, 23090 Hilo Court North, discussed a problem with the pipe and the sewer between 231st and Hyo Court North. He commented that Bittersweet Two appeared to have problems, even without Bittersweet Three. He discussed water problems and the sinking of the street.

Tim Saari, 7370 233rd Street, said he opposed the development because there was no road out to 235th. He commented that 233rd Street would pick up additional traffic for those who wanted to go north. He thanked the staff for the information at the public meeting. He asked if the developer considered moving the road near 235th to the east and going on the easement of the two properties. He said he submitted a petition that his neighbors signed and turned in a personal statement about the traffic.

Maria Bloomberg, 7610 231st St N, asked if she should address the email that she sent. She said that they live at the intersection of Henna and 231st. They were concerned about the traffic and the property on the corner with the very large pine trees. She noted that there were many kids and families who went on walks, so she hoped that if the variance was approved, something would need to be done to help slow down traffic. She said that the typical cul-de-sac code was 500 feet, and other nearby cities had cul-de-sac codes between 500 feet and 600 feet. There were a few cities that were between 750 feet and 800 feet. She found that St. Croix Beach had a 1302-foot code with 2.5-acre lots. She said that adding the development would put an additional 1200 feet to the cul-de-sac. The cul-de-sac was already 1800 feet, so she thought it would not be in the best interest of the town. She said that the property owner purchased the land knowing that the road access could be a potential hindrance, so she said it was a self-created hardship to purchase land that was landlocked.

Luke Milanovich, 23989 Hilo Court North, said he had soil erosion, and there was a wetland at the end of the street near his property. He encouraged them to investigate this information.

Public Hearing was closed at 7:08 p.m.

Community Development Director Wittman addressed the concerns with the sewer. She said she did not know the age or material of the sewer, but the City completes a city-wide sewer study based on all the potential capacity in the urban service area for the decade. She said that the property had been analyzed for the density to add this in without having a capacity issue. The study is completed every ten years based on the open, developable land area in that decade. She said that the entire City had a lot of capacity for sewer. She stated that this project would require wetland and sewer delineation review by both the watershed and the City, which would have two separate standards. She stated that they understood that many neighborhoods had water issues, and the standards



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were higher than when the other additions were developed. She said that it was not the City's policy to use traffic slowing mechanisms like speed bumps, because it damages items like snowplows.

A member of the audience made disparaging comments about speed issues and his own personal resolutions that he would provide. Vice Chair Stender encouraged the residents to stay on topic during the meeting, and that they all would like to have safe communities.

Commissioner Stehler asked about the possibility of connecting through Kulenkamp Park and if that connection had been considered. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the City staff had not investigated the option because there are topographical challenges, and the park can be wet.

Commissioner Young said that all the connection options had gone north. She thought it might be wise for the developer to consider a shorter-distance connection and more obtainable property by going south. She stated that she understood that neighborhoods changed, which can be difficult. She said she understood the concerns expressed by residents with wet basements. She noted that the length of the cul-de-sac was of huge concern to her, because the cul-de-sac starts at the road that comes off North Shore. She said that all cities have restrictions on cul-de-sacs because of snow removal and placement, and getting into a very long cul-de-sac when there is an emergency. She disagreed with the analysis of the staff recommendation about the special circumstances, because they were not unique physical characteristics. She stated that this was a self-created situation.

Commissioner Stehler said that the hardship of usage was not as though it came about after the property was acquired. He said that nothing had changed about the property conditions, so he found it difficult. He discussed concerns with the ability to get the road to go through and connect.

Commissioner Aplikowski thought that the design of the neighborhood was great, but it was in the wrong space. He thought that planning on existing landowners to sell their land to eliminate the need for the variance was wishful thinking. He questioned if the neighborhood was redesigned with smaller lots and a road loop-through, it would still be a cul-de-sac. He thought that with the variance request, he was not in support of the item.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to deny Resolution No. 04-08-26-01, the variance request for the construction of an overlength cul-de-sac located at the property of 03.032.21.43.0001, based on the reasoning that there were no unique physical characteristics that were prohibiting a reasonable use, since agriculture was a reasonable use still possible for the parcel. The physical hardship could be mitigated by going to the north or the south. She said the hardship was created by the applicant because they were requesting more than a prudent length for the cul-de-sac. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stehler. Motion carried 6-0.



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Community Development Director Wittman suggested a friendly amendment to the motion to ask staff to draft a new resolution memorializing it to be brought back at a future Planning Commission meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to recommend denial of the Preliminary Plat since it was contingent on the variance request that was denied.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 6-0.

b. Variance – William and Jeannette Wittrock – 20703 Keewahtin Ave N

i. Public Hearing

ii. Final Action for Variance – Resolution No. 04-08-26-02

City Planner Birchland reviewed the variance request for 20703 Keewahtin Ave North. He said that the request was for a porch addition to the existing home with a variance request from the ordinary high water level setback. He provided an overview of the existing conditions of the site, including previous variance requests granted. He noted that they previously had an approved variance request for the porch in 2003, but the City Code requires the construction to be done within a year of the variance request approval. He noted that the lot was non-conforming and had unique conditions. He said that staff recommended approval of the resolution with the standard condition that the porch meet all requirements of the Comfort Forest Lake Watershed District and be constructed within one year of the variance request.

Public Hearing was opened at 7:33 p.m.

William Wittrock, 20703 Keewahtin Avenue North, stated that he thought conversations with the staff were helpful. He reviewed a brief history of the property, which was platted in 1928. He discussed the different historical cabin additions. He said he made the porch smaller and designed it so he would not have to remove any trees. He pulled the edge of the porch back from the lake.

Commissioner Young discussed the challenges and difficulties and voiced appreciation that in the design work and application, the resident worked hard to deal with the existing condition that they were stuck with, so as not to need any further variance.

Public Hearing was closed at 7:40 p.m.

Motion: Commissioner Aplikowski made a Motion to approve Resolution 04-08-26-02 approving a 53-foot rear setback variance for the property located at 20703 Keewahtin Ave North (PID 24-032-21-14-0002).

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 5-1 (Stehler voted against).



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Assistant Community Development Director Wittman clarified that the resident would have to go through the building permit process as the next step.

c. Variances – James Larson & Janice Bostrom – 4844 210th St No.

i. Public Hearing

ii. Final Action for Variance – Resolution No. 04-08-26-03

iii. Final Action for Variance – Resolution No. 04-08-26-04

City Planner Birchland reviewed the variance request for a new home at 4844 210th Street North. He said that the applicant was requesting to build a new house on the property, and the applicant was requesting a variance for side yard setbacks and impervious surface coverage.

Commissioner Young asked if the residents were designing the home on an empty lot, and why they were not creating the issues for the variance. City Planner Birchland responded that if they were to reduce the house in width, he would have to create an outdoor sidewalk, which would not reduce the impervious surface coverage.

Commissioner Stehler commented that he was going to recuse himself from the item on the agenda, since the resident was his neighbor.

Public Hearing was opened at 7:50 p.m.

James Larson, 19794 Faulk Avenue North, stated that they were aware of the setbacks and noted that they were foregoing cantilevers and bump-outs. He said that they were trying to build a modest house that they can live in for the rest of their lives, and want to fit everything onto one floor. He said if they reduced the house, they would have to get rid of a hallway. He commented that they wanted to install a second garage for extra space, but they would make sure they installed drainage systems or other necessities to make sure the drainage does not cause any issues for their neighbors. He noted that they were working with the watershed district on a landscaping plan.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked if it was possible to move things closer to the road to reduce the driveway. Mr. Larson answered that the second garage was closer to the street, so they would lose that. He stated that the neighboring lots were both high and low. He noted that they were trying to maintain the setback ordinance for the garage. He stated that they considered adding length to the attached garage and moving it closer to the street to get the impervious surface down to 30 percent. He said if they add garage space, they would take away driveway space.

Victoria McNeel, 4888 210th Street North, said she lived four houses away from the new build. She attended the meeting out of curiosity. She said if the neighbors had issues with the variance, they should be at the meeting. If they did not attend the meeting, they must not have concerns. She said that they brought in dirt for their lot since they had a lot of water.



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Commissioner Young said that the City's rules were that they could not change the elevation on their property that would impact the drainage of another property.

Public Hearing was closed at 7:59 p.m.

Motion: Vice Chair Stender made a Motion to Approve Resolution No. 04-08-26-03, approving a 1-foot side yard setback variance with conditions A through C listed in the staff report.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Young. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Stehler abstained)

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Approve Resolution No. 04-08-26-04, denying a 5 percent impervious surface coverage.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 4-1-1 (Aplikowski voted against; Stehler abstained)

8. Updates

Community Development Director Wittman said that this was the first time Vice Chair Stender chaired a Planning Commission and did a great job.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that Vice Chair Stender did a great job at the meeting.

Commissioner Young asked about the entrance to the airport road. Commissioner Stehler said that with the detours and 97 being closed, making a left turn near the airport road was dangerous. The City decided to barricade the intersection for the safety of the residents.

9. Adjourn

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 6-0.