

---

The meeting was held in-person, with participation via Zoom also available.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Kopitzke called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **ROLL CALL** – Present: Kris Kopitzke, Justin Sykora, Doug Parker, Marc Porupsky, James Langan, Christian Dawson, Kuchen Hale, Sally Doherty A quorum was present. Absent was Jacob Edwards.  
**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – City Administrator Ron Moorse, City Council member Stan Ross
4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** –  
Motion/Second Hale/Parker to approve the agenda for the May 6, 2024 Planning Commission meeting.  
Passed 8-0.  
Sykora will abstain from item 7a
5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** –  
Motion/Second Doherty/Dawson to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2024 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 8-0.  
The March & April Planning Commission meetings were cancelled due to lack of agenda items.
6. **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS** none
7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**
  - A. Belwin Conservancy Conditional Use Permit Application to Document and Recognize as a Nature Center Use the Activities Across the Belwin Properties with the Following Addresses: 14020 Valley Creek Trl. S., 2176 Stagecoach Trl. S., the following PID#'s near 2176 Stagecoach Trl. S.: 16.028.20.11.0009, 15.028.20.23.0006, 15.028.20.24.0004, 15.028.20.24.0001, 15.028.20.24.0003, 15.028.20.31.0001, 15.028.20.13.0001, 2612 St. Croix Trl. S., 2398 St. Croix Trl. S., 1553 Stagecoach Trl. S., 825 Stagecoach Trl. S., 795 Indian Trl. S., 15551 Division St., the following PID#'s near 15551 Division St.: 03.028.20.13.0001, 03.028.20.24.0001, 03.028.20.21.0001, 03.028.20.12.0002, 03.028.20.11.0002 and 105 Stagecoach Trl. S.  
Chair Kopitzke opened the public hearing opened at 7:04 pm.  
Administrator Moorse provided a summary of the application. The Belwin Conservancy (Belwin) owns, conserves, protects, restores and manages a large number of parcels in Afton for a variety of activities. In order to document the various parcels and activities in an organized manner, Belwin has organized the properties into eight general sites, with descriptions of activities and maps for each site. These are reflected in the attached materials, which are very helpful in understanding and visualizing the uses and locations of the Belwin property sites. Belwin has prepared this information within the context of a Conditional Use Permit application to enable the various activities across the Belwin properties to be documented and recognized broadly as a Nature Center use.  
Katie Bloome, Belwin Executive Director, summarized current uses of the property and proposed new building and activities.  
Barb Ronningen, 11<sup>th</sup> St S, asked about nature center definition.  
Chair Kopitzke stated that when it was developed, they stressed the protection and educational aspects.  
Barb Ronningen expressed concern over maintenance, the too large deer herd, and concerns over garlic mustard which is spreading off their property.  
Katie Bloome acknowledged the deer population is becoming a problem.  
Unknown meeting attendee asked how this designation helps or what is the difference.  
Katie Bloome stated Belwin currently does not have a CUP with Afton; they would like to do the right thing and be officially recognized and transparent.  
Unknown meeting attendee expressed concern that the focus of Belwin seems to be changing from a focus on preserving land to a focus on bringing more people to the properties and to be more inclusive. Questioned how the larger number of people will be managed.

58 Hugh Huelster, 2132 Stagecoach Tr, stated he was thrilled to hear about new building upgrade to allow access  
59 for special needs students.  
60 Katie Bloome stated that Belwin evaluated needs and more schools were asking for space for environmental  
61 programing. Belwin has opened more of its land for hiking, and is working to make their land, facilities and  
62 activities accessible to a broad range of people, with a focus on those with disabilities.  
63 Jennifer, Afton resident, stated she feels that Belwin is what makes Afton a special place to live.  
64 No other comments were received.  
65 **Motion/Second Hale/Parker to close public hearing. Passed 7-0 (Sykora abstain)**  
66 Public hearing closed at 7:30pm.  
67 Porupsky asked if Belwin grows in the future do they need to amend the CUP - for example if they acquire  
68 more land or expand buildings. Also stated he has some tax base concerns.  
69 Doherty stated a CUP would be amended based on use.  
70 Parker stated the use has to stay consistent with the CUP.  
71 Questions were raised regarding whether the definition of Nature Center was well reviewed when it was  
72 adopted. The definition was discussed and revised multiple times and the City Attorney reviewed and  
73 commented on the definition and revisions.  
74 Doherty noted that two years ago the ordinance had no definition for Belwin's use. Now we have a description  
75 of what they do.  
76 **Motion/Second Doherty/Hale to recommend approval of the Belwin Conservancy application for a**  
77 **Conditional Use Permit to document and recognize as a Nature Center Use the activities across the**  
78 **Belwin Property.**  
79 Langan asked if there is any change in operations that will come with this designation, would like legal advice.  
80 Dawson stated the city benefits by having a definition.  
81 **Motion vote: Passed 5-2-1 (2 nay Porupsky, Langan), 1 abstain (Sykora)**  
82

83 B. Chris Erdman Variance Application for an Attached Garage at 12671 10th Street South  
84 Chair Kopitzke opened the public hearing at 7:53 pm.  
85 Administrator Moorse provided background on the variance which originally was to allow a 2,000 sq. ft.  
86 accessory building to be located 50 feet from the east property line vs the required 100 feet. At that time, it  
87 was determined that if Mr. Erdman attached the accessory building to the existing house, it would only need a  
88 setback of 50 feet, so a variance was not required. (The house is located approximately 70 feet from the east  
89 property line.) However, Mr. Erdman subsequently advised the City that the 50 foot setback was actually to  
90 the east property line of a very long 16 foot wide driveway portion of a larger parcel to the east and south of  
91 the Erdman property, and that the proposed accessory building would meet only a 34 foot sideyard setback to  
92 the Erdman's east property line. Mr. Erdman has suggested that because both the 16 foot wide driveway  
93 parcel and the 50 foot wide driveway parcel are between his property and the nearest property to the east with  
94 a house, allowing the 34 foot setback would still provide a 50 foot setback from the garage to the property  
95 line of the nearest property with a house.  
96 Chris Erdman, applicant, was present for questions. He stated he is in the process of acquiring the 16 foot  
97 wide driveway parcel which would provide a setback of approximately 47- 48 feet from the garage to the east  
98 side property line. The acquisition process requires a survey of his property to enable a subdivision for a lot  
99 line rearrangement. He would like to be able to move forward with the attached garage while the acquisition  
100 is in-process.  
101 No other comments were received.  
102 **Motion/Second Hale/Parker to close public hearing. Passed 8-0.**  
103 Public hearing closed at 8:04 pm.  
104 Sykora stated that since the survey isn't done yet we don't know exactly what variance to give  
105 Doherty suggested granting the variance on condition that the 16' parcel is purchased, and grant setback of 5  
106 feet.  
107 **Motion/Second Doherty/Hale to recommend approval of the Chris Erdman variance with additional**  
108 **conditions: that the 16' parcel to the east be purchased and to allow a setback of a minimum of 45 feet**  
109 **for the attached garage. Passed 8-0**

- 110
- 111
- 112 **8. NEW BUSINESS**
- 113 A. Election of Officers
- 114 **Motion/Second Porupsky/Doherty to elect Justin Sykora for Vice-Chair. Passed 8-0.**
- 115 **Motion/Second Porupsky/Doherty to elect Kris Kopitzke for Chair. Passed 8-0.**
- 116 **Motion/Second Porupsky/Doherty to elect Doug Parker for Secretary. Passed 8-0.**
- 117

- 118 **9. OLD BUSINESS -**
- 119 A. Update on City Council Actions
- 120 Council member Ross provided a summary of the April 16, 2024 Council meeting.
- 121

- 122 **10. ADJOURN –**
- 123 **Motion/Second Sykora/Doherty to adjourn. Passed 8-0.**
- 124 Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM
- 125
- 126
- 127

128 Respectfully submitted by:

129  
130 JY  
131 \_\_\_\_\_  
132 Julie Yoho, City Clerk

133  
134 To be approved on  
135 June 3, 2024 as (check one): Presented:                   X                   or Amended: \_\_\_\_\_  
136  
137