
Planning commission

1. Call to order and roll call

Members present: Jim Beneke, Christopher Caton, Mia Divecha, Matt Eckholm, John Flanagan, Tess Machalek, Sarah Strain, Tom Weber

Members absent:

Staff present: Katelyn Champoux, Gary Morrison

2. Approval of Minutes – July 1, 2026 regular and study session minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Eckholm, seconded by Commissioner Flanagan to approve the July 1, 2026 minutes as amended with a minor change to the header date.

The motion passed 7-0.

3. Hearing

3a. Title: Zoning text amendment – Medical/dental clinic or Office

Location: 6213 Lake Street

Applicant: Liz Hochman

Case No: 26-07-ZA

Mr. Morrison, Zoning Administrator, presented the application submitted by Ms. Hochman and Ms. Knight requesting an amendment to allow medical and dental clinic or office uses in the Neighborhood 2, 3, and 4 (N2, N3, N4) zoning districts. The applicants intend to occupy a long-standing, currently vacant one-story office building on Lake Street that was rezoned from commercial to neighborhood in the recent zoning code update. Staff proposed three conditions: a 2,500 square foot maximum size; a defined list of permitted uses (dental care, eye care, physical therapy, family practice, prenatal care, counseling, acupuncture, and similar low-impact uses); and a prohibition on high-impact activities such as surgery, radiotherapy, and MRI that may generate hazardous waste. Typical zoning standards will still apply.

Commissioner Eckholm raised a concern that prohibiting "radiotherapy" could inadvertently prevent standard dental X-rays. In response to Commissioner Weber, Mr. Morrison confirmed that the amendment could be approved with staff given discretion to clarify the language regarding x-rays as an incidental use in a dental office. Commissioner Beneke questioned traffic in this zoning district. Mr. Morrison said due to the maximum size of 2500 sq. ft. the amount of traffic that is typically generated pretty low. Commissioner Caton asked whether hours-of-operation restrictions should be added. Mr. Morrison noted there is no limitation of hours, but this could be incorporated as an additional condition if the commission desired. Commissioner Eckholm confirmed that this application is for N2, 3 and 4 (not N1) zoning districts.

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Chair Strain opened the public hearing. noting no members of the public came forward to comment, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Divecha asked why similar low-impact uses such as coffee shops or hair salons were not being considered simultaneously and could this applicant request a variance. Mr. Morrison explained that a variance for this property is not an option because the state of Minnesota does not allow cities to give variances to allow a use in a district that isn't already allowed. Commissioner Divecha preferred a broader and more robust discussion before making code-wide amendments but indicated she is not concerned about this particular application. The commission generally agreed that a fuller discussion of permitted uses in neighborhood districts belonged in a future study session or as part of the upcoming 2050 Comprehensive Plan update.

It was moved by Commissioner Echkholm, seconded by Commissioner Weber to approve the addition of medical/dental clinic or office land use to the Neighborhood -2, -3 and -4 zoning districts with the directive to staff to review and clarify radiology language to ensure standard dental radiology is not inadvertently prohibited. The motion passed 6-0 with Commissioner Divecha abstaining.

4. Other Business

5. Communications

6. Adjournment – p.m.

Signed by:

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 Laura Chamberlain, liaison

Signed by:

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 Sarah Strain, chair member

These minutes were created with the assistance of a generative AI transcript service, then edited and finalized by a city staff person.