

City of Duluth Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 14th, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.
Duluth City Hall Council Chambers

Call to Order

President Andrea Wedul called to order the meeting of the city of Duluth Planning Commission at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 14th, 2026, in the Duluth city hall council chambers.

Roll Call

Members Present: Josh Axelson, Nik Bayuk, Kate Ferguson, Brian Hammond, Dave Sarvela, Andrea Wedul, Kate Van Daele, and Andrew Weisz

Members Absent: Chris Adatte

Staff Present: Amanda Mangan, Nick Bax, Jenn Moses, Chris Lee [CL], Jason Mozol [JM], Reina Owecke [RO], and Sam Smith

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from June 9th, 2026

MOTION/Second: Ferguson/Van Daele approved

VOTE: (8-0)

Public Comment on Items Not on Agenda

No comments.

Consent Agenda

(Item PLCUP-2606-0012 was removed from the consent agenda and placed under public hearings)

PLCUP-2605-0010 Concurrent Use Permit for a Pergola and Outdoor Seating near 307 Canal Park Dr by Vitta Pizza Inc. [CH]

PLCUP-2606-00011 Concurrent Use Permit for Wireless Facility near 827 E 1st St by Smartlink LLC [CL]

~~**PLCUP-2606-0012** Concurrent Use Permit for a Pergola and Outdoor Seating near 101 E Superior St by Duluth Coffee Company [CH]~~

PLVAC-2605-0003 Vacation of Right of Way near 422 N 19th Ave W by Michael Contardo [CL]

PLVAR-2606-0016 Variance from Floodplain Standards at 2517 Minnesota Ave by Jason Davis and Monica Forcier [JM]

PLVAR-2606-0017 Variance from Side Yard Setbacks at 2517 Minnesota Ave by Jason Davis and Monica Forcier [JM]

PLVAR-2606-0018 Variance from Shoreland Standards at 3825 W 7th St by Donna and Gregory Kent [JM]

PLVAR-2606-0019 Variance from Accessory Structure Standards at 3825 W 7th St by Donna and Gregory Kent [JM]

PLSUB-2606-0005 Minor Subdivision at 1422 99th Ave W by Clayton Nading [RO]

MOTION/Second: Van Daele/Sarvela approved the consent agenda.

VOTE: (8-0)

Public Hearings

PLCUP-2606-0012 Concurrent Use Permit for a Pergola and Outdoor Seating near 101 E Superior St by Duluth Coffee Company [CH]

Staff: Jenn Moses presented the staff report, explaining that the existing pergola and outdoor seating area have been in place for several years. While the applicant previously obtained an annual Sidewalk Use Permit, staff determined that a Concurrent Use Permit (CUP) is more appropriate because the outdoor seating is intended for long-term use.

Commissioners: Sarvela noted that aerial imagery appeared to show two tables located outside the proposed permit area, closer to the curb.

Van Daele asked the applicant to elaborate on the investments that they've made in the subject area over the years.

Applicant: Eric Faust, owner of Duluth Coffee Company, stated that the seating is located approximately 7 feet 3 inches from the curb. He acknowledged the tables may have recently been placed outside the approved area but confirmed they have been measured and will remain within the permit boundaries.

In response to Commissioner Van Daele, Faust explained that he previously operated under a Sidewalk Use Permit for the frontage of 105 East Superior Street. After acquiring all four suites in the building, he expanded the outdoor seating area across the entire frontage. He said staff have worked with him over the years on the use of the adjacent green space, and the annual Sidewalk Use Permit has now been replaced with the recommended CUP. The outdoor seating is typically used from May through November, and the pergola has helped activate the space between the casino and the coffee shop while also serving as a snow storage area during the winter.

Commissioners: Weisz asked how long the Conditional Use Permit would remain in effect.

Staff: Moses explained that a CUP does not expire and remains valid unless it is rescinded by the City Council.

Public: No speakers.

MOTION/Second: Van Daele/Bayuk approved

VOTE: (8-0)

PLUMA-2605-0002 Rezoning of Piedmont Trail System Parcels from RR-1 to P-1 by City of Duluth [RO]

Staff: Reina Owecke gave a presentation of the staff report. The city proposes to rezone 29 parcels totaling approximately 517 acres within the Piedmont Trail system from Rural Residential (RR-1) to Parks and Open Space (P-1). Although the land has been managed for recreational use for many years, the rezoning is needed to align the zoning designation with the property's existing use, future land use designation, and the goals of the Strategic Public Lands Realignment Project.

Owecke explained that the proposal also supports a 2025 City ordinance committing to permanently protect at least 1,500 acres of public land through park designation, P-1 zoning, or inclusion in the Duluth Natural Areas Program. The rezoning is consistent with the Imagine

Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan by preserving open space and strengthening the city's connected trail system. Staff recommended that the Planning Commission approve the rezoning and forward it to the City Council for final consideration.

Commissioners: Bayuk asked whether the acreage included in the rezoning proposal counts toward the City Council's goal of protecting 1,500 acres of public land.

Sarvela asked whether the City already maintains the property and if the rezoning would change how it is managed.

Staff: Owecke confirmed that the subject area does count towards the 1,500 acres. The proposal only includes parcels acquired through tax forfeiture and indicated the southern parcel may not meet those criteria.

Commissioners: Hammond asked why the southernmost parcel remains zoned RR-1 and was not included in the rezoning proposal.

Staff: Owecke explained that the rezoning proposal includes only the tax-forfeited parcels that were part of the project. She noted that the southernmost parcel may still be tax-forfeited and therefore was not included at this time.

Public: No speakers.

MOTION/Second: Bayuk/Ferguson approved

VOTE: (8-0)

Communications

Land Use Supervisor (LUS) Report

Moses presented a memo updating the Planning Commission on the ongoing Lester Park Golf Course land use study. She reported that the project report and final recommendations are being finalized and will be presented at a third public open house on July 30. The final plan will also be shared with several other City boards and commissions, and there will be a public hearing held at the Planning Commission's August meeting.

Commissioners: Van Daele praised the extensive community engagement throughout the Lester Park Golf Course land use study and expressed disappointment that more media were not present at the meeting. She asked approximately how many people had participated in the process and asked whether staff anticipated more contentious public feedback.

Staff: Moses estimated that thousands of people have participated, noting that the first round of public engagement generated a significant number of responses. She added that responses to public comments are available on the project website and that regular email updates helped keep the community informed throughout the process. Staff do not anticipate more contentious feedback, explaining that the final recommendations are consistent with the public input received.

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Report

No report.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.