



# Staff Report for PLVAR-2603-0007

## Application Information:

**Application Type:** Variance from Shoreland Standards

**Location of Subject:** 8325 Knowlton Blvd

**Legal Description:** 010-2744-00105

**Applicant:** City of Cloquet

**Applicant Contact:** Caleb Peterson

**Agent:** SEH

**Agent Contact:** Matt Henderson

**Staff Contact:** Jason Mozol, [jmozol@duluthmn.gov](mailto:jmozol@duluthmn.gov)

### Deadline for Action:

**Application Date:** March 9, 2026

**Date Extension Letter Mailed:** March 23, 2026

**60 Days:** May 8, 2026

**120 Days:** July 7, 2026

**Site Visit Date:** N/A

**Sign Notice Date:** March 30, 2026

**Neighbor Letter Date:** March 23, 2026

**Number of Letters Sent:** 1

## Proposal:

Applicant is requesting a Shoreland Variance to expand the footprint of electrical components related to the water pump station on the site.

## Recommended Action:

Staff recommends approval with conditions.

## Zoning and Land Use:

	Current Zoning	Existing Land Use	Future Land Use Map Designation
<b>Subject</b>	RR-1	Utility	Open Space
<b>North</b>	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space
<b>South</b>	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space
<b>East</b>	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space
<b>West</b>	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space

## Summary of Code Requirements:

**Sec. 50-37.9.C . General Variance Criteria (paraphrased):** Granting of variances of any kind is limited to situations where, due to characteristics of the applicant’s property, enforcement of the ordinance would cause the landowner practical difficulties.

**Sec 50-18.1.D. Shoreland Standards (paraphrased):** Structures must be setback at least 150’ from cold-water streams and tributaries.

**Sec. 50-37.9.L – Standards for variances in shorelands:** No variance shall be granted that compromises the general purposes or intent of Section 50-18.1.D or results in adverse consequences to the environment. Variances shall include a requirement for the applicant to mitigate the impacts of the variance on shoreland areas

## Comprehensive Plan Governing Principle and/or Policies and Current History (if applicable):

Principle #3 – Support existing economic base – The paper mill in Cloquet is a significant contributor to the regional economy and this project is key to its long term, continued operation.

**Future Land Use: Open Space-** High natural resource or scenic value, with substantial restrictions and development limitations. Primarily public lands but limited private use is anticipated subject to use and design controls.

**History:** A water pump station was developed on this site in approximately 1969.

## Review and Discussion Items:


Staff finds:

1. Applicant is requesting a Variance from Shoreland Standards to allow for electrical equipment to be placed within the structure setback from the tributary of Knowlton Creek. Knowlton Creek and its tributaries are cold-water shoreland zones with an associated 150' structure setback.
2. *Variance Criteria #1 (exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape or other property conditions):* A tributary of Knowlton Creek runs through the northwest portion of the site.
3. *Variance Criteria #2 (circumstances unique to the property, not created by the property owner):* This site was developed prior to shoreland regulations, so shoreland setbacks were not accounted for in the site layout.
4. *Variance Criteria #3 (circumstances are peculiar to this property and do not apply generally to other land or buildings):* This site is surrounded by wooded areas of Spirit Mountain, with no adjacent structures having been built within the shoreland setback area. Further downstream, there are houses that were also built within the shoreland setback, but those do not have the peculiar circumstances of being a pump station requiring utility upgrades.
5. *Variance Criteria #4 (proposes to use in a reasonable manner not permitted by code):* The most feasible location for the equipment is directly adjacent to the structure in the same location as the existing equipment which falls within the structure setback.
6. *Variance Criteria #5 (not impair light/air, increase congestion, or impair public safety or property values).* This request will not impair access to light or air and will not increase congestion in the area because adjacent properties are unoccupied open space.
7. *Variance Criteria #6 (will not impair intent of this Chapter or alter the essential character of the locality).* To limit impacts to the essential character of the locality, the equipment will be screened by vegetation.
8. *Standards for variances in shorelands (does not compromise intent of shoreland regulations and mitigates impacts).* 700 square feet of the proposed project fall within the shoreland setback. To offset these impacts, the applicant proposes establishing a 1,015 square foot signed, no mow area along the forest edge adjacent to the tributary. This no mow area will increase the vegetated buffer between the site and the waterway.
9. No public, agency, or City comments were received.
10. Per UDC Section 50-37.1.N, approved variances lapse if the project or activity authorized by the permit has not begun within one-year.

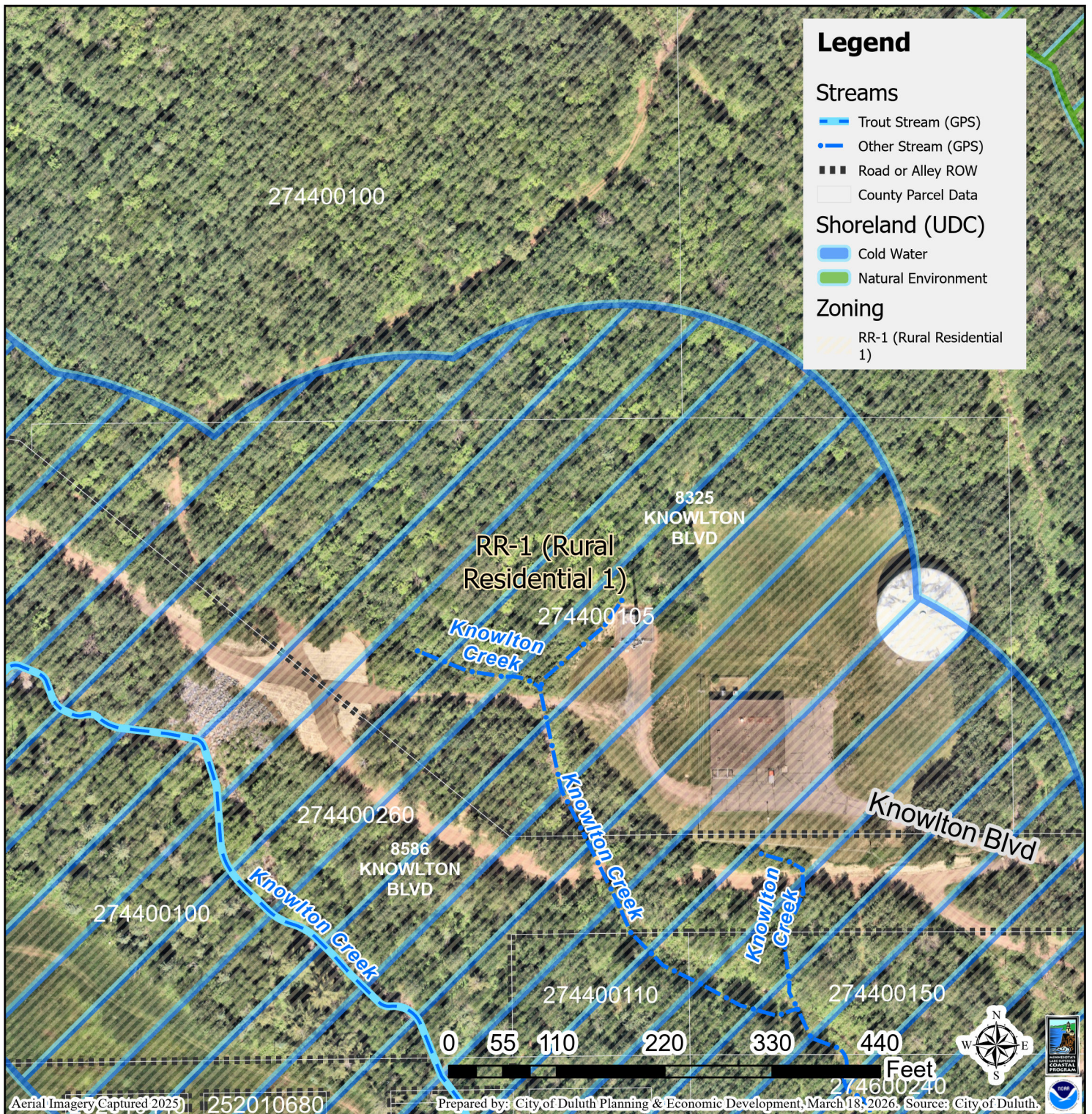
## Staff Recommendation:

Based on the above findings, Staff recommends that Planning Commission approve the Variance with the following conditions:

1. The project must be constructed and limited to the plans submitted with the application.
2. At least 1,015 square feet of existing lawn must be converted to a no mow area and delineated by signage.

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3. Any alterations to the approved plans that do not alter major elements of the plan may be approved by the Land Use Supervisor without further Planning Commission review; however, no such administration approval shall constitute a variance from the provisions of Chapter 50.


# Staff Report Map for PLSUP-2603-0005:



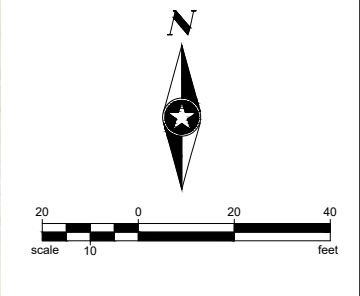
**Figure 1.**

Aerial imagery captured in 2025, showing Parcels #010-2744-00105 outlined along the north side of Knowlton Blvd, a property shown to exist within the Cold-Water Shoreland Overlay Zone.

The City of Duluth has tried to ensure that the information contained in this map or electronic document is accurate. The City of Duluth makes no warranty or guarantee concerning the accuracy or reliability. This drawing/data is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. The drawing/data is a compilation of records, information and data located in various City, County and State offices and other sources affecting the area shown and is to be used for reference purposes only. The City of Duluth shall not be liable for errors contained within this data provided or for any damages in connection with the use of this information contained within.



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NOTE:  
SEE STRUCTURAL PLANS FOR CABLE TRAY SUPPORTS

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SEH Project	SAGPA 186212	Rev.#	Plan Revision Issue Description	Date	Rev.#	Sheet Revision Issue Description	Date
Drawn By	KLG						
Designed By	MH						
Checked By	##						

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA.

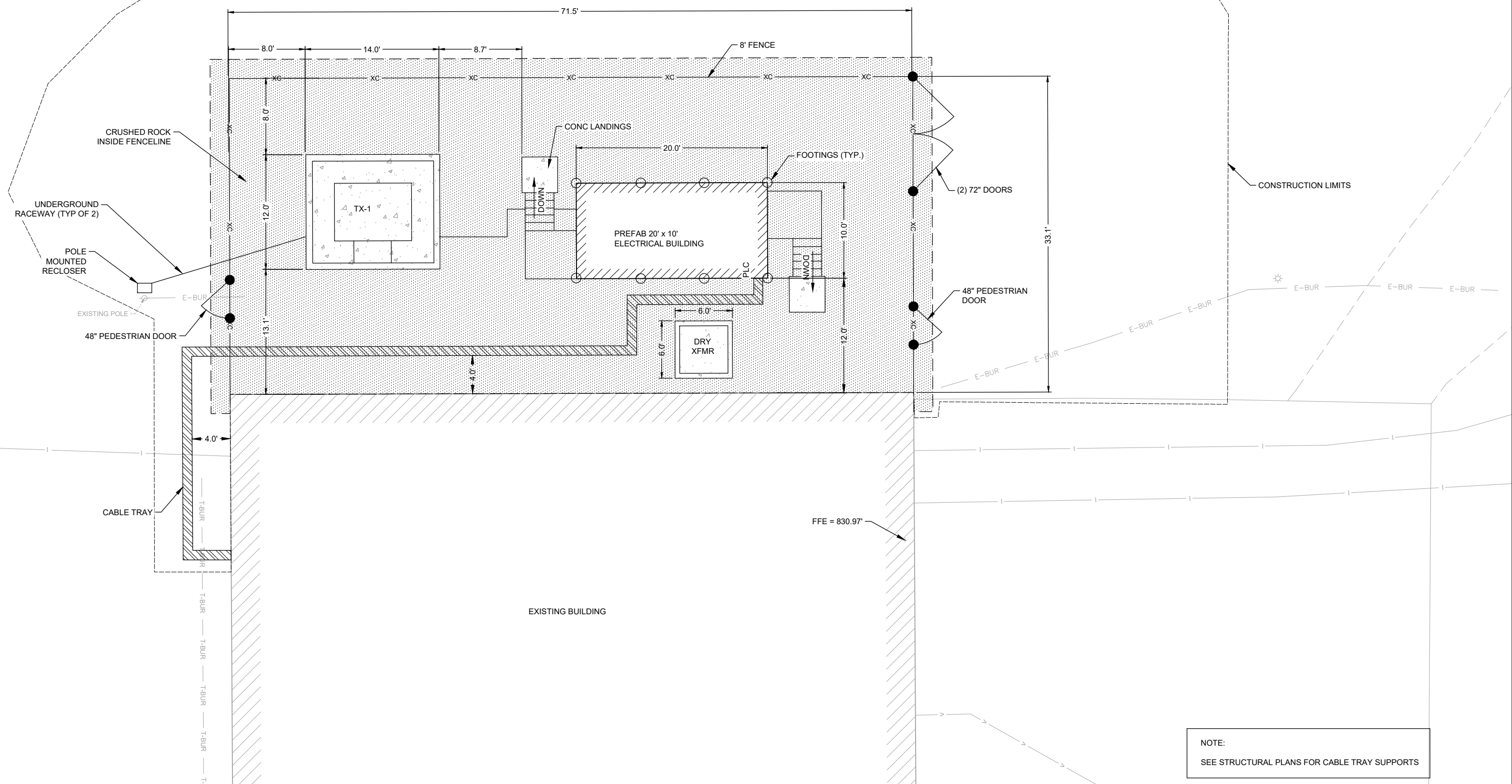
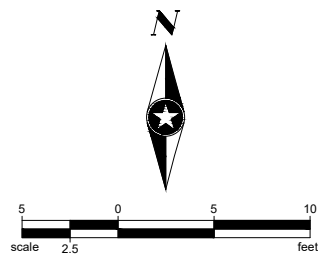
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**WATER PUMP STATION 2  
IMPROVEMENTS**  
DULUTH, MINNESOTA

**GENERAL LAYOUT  
STATION 2**

**C002**  
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NOTE:  
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SEH Project SAGPA 186212  
 Drawn By KLG  
 Designed By MH  
 Checked By ##

Rev.#	Plan Revision Issue Description	Date

Rev.#	Sheet Revision Issue Description	Date



I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA.  
 DATE \_\_\_\_\_ LICENSE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**WATER PUMP STATION 2**  
**IMPROVEMENTS**  
 DULUTH, MINNESOTA

**SITE LAYOUT PLAN**  
**STATION 2**

**C004**  
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