POPE COUNTY
MINNESOTA

MEETING MINUTES
POPE COUNTY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Thursday, June 25th, 2026

The Planning Advisory Commission (PAC) convened in regular session on Thursday, June 25th, 2026 at the Pope County Courthouse, 3rd floor Meeting Room.

Members Present: Roger Isdahl, John Messenger (Chairman), Ted Kannegiesser, Russell Barkeim, Paul Gerde (County Commissioner) and alt. Paul Wildman (County Commissioner).

Other Officials Present: David Green (Director) and Leigh Nelson (Senior Administrative Associate).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Messenger at 7:13 p.m.

Additions and Corrections to the Agenda

Conditional Use #CUP-26-005 Zachary Gust on behalf of Kaiya Blanshan was withdrawn by the landowner. There were no other additions or corrections to the agenda. A motion to accept the agenda as modified was made by Commissioner Gerde and seconded by Member Isdahl. Motion carried unanimously.

Review minutes of May 28th 2026 Regular Meeting of the PAC

The minutes of the PAC meeting that was held on May 28th 2026 were submitted for approval. Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Member Barkeim and seconded by Member Kannegiesser. Motion carried unanimously.

General Business

Director Green addressed those in attendance, providing a brief overview of the PAC's role as a quasi-judicial body that hears applications for conditional use permits (CUPs) to the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance. Unlike variances, the standards for approval or denial are as identified in the Land Use Controls Ordinance and Performance Standards. The PAC can also be a legislative body, as they will be later in the meeting when reviewing Ordinance Amendments.

Old Business

Conditional Use #CUP-26-005 Zachary Gust on behalf of Kaiya Blanshan PID# 03-0003-003

Application withdrawn.

New Business

Conditional Use #CUP-26-007 Joshua & Caitlin Albers PID# 01-0074-001

The applicant is requesting consideration to construct/locate a non-farm residential structure in an Agriculture Protection (A-2) zoning district. The Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance

section 7.3.K. requires a Conditional Use Permit to locate a non-farm residence in the A-2 zoning district.

Chair Messenger read the background from the Staff Report, then asked Director Green if there was any additional information that had not been presented at the Board of Adjustment hearing. Director Green stated that the pertinent facts were covered in the Variance hearing. Staff does not object to the Conditional Use Permit, and recommends approval with the conditions presented in the Staff Report.

Chair Messenger asked the PAC members and the Applicants for additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing at 7:19 p.m., and asked for anyone to speak in favor of the application. With no one speaking in favor or opposition, the Chair closed the public hearing at 7:19 p.m.

Chari Messenger asked the Site Team if they had anything further to add. He commented that this is a high spot on the quarter quarter, and that this is just a little land out of agricultural production.

Motion:

Chairman Messenger seeks a motion. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use permit with the conditions and findings as provided in the Staff Report, and the motion was seconded by Member Isdahl. The motion carried unanimously at 7:20. The findings are as follows:

1. **The project is in compliance with the setback and other provisions of this ordinance unless a variance has been granted:**

   Finding: Any proposed structure and/or use will necessarily be in compliance with the provisions of the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance as a condition of the permitting unless a variance has been granted.

2. **The use is not in conflict with the County Comprehensive Land Use Plan:**

   Finding: The current Comprehensive Plan includes goals that state a recognition of diverse and existing land uses throughout the county. It is noted that not all uses are compatible and that there should be consideration as to separation, siting, development requirements and operating standards. The proposed residence is located adjacent to existing residential development and existing roadway infrastructure, thereby limiting fragmentation of agricultural land and supporting the Comprehensive Plan goal of balancing rural residential development with long-term agricultural preservation.

3. **That the use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, not substantially diminish or impair neighborhood property values in the area and will not interfere with the best interest of the surrounding area or the community as a whole:**

   Finding: The proposed land use is located in a sparsely populated rural setting in Westport Township. The dominant land uses in this area are agricultural and open space. This non-farm residential use should not create interference with future development on adjacent properties, nor is it expected to diminish or impair neighboring property values. The Feedlot Officer identified six feedlots within two miles of the proposal and concluded that the proposal meets applicable setback requirements. While the residence may be considered in future feedlot expansion evaluations, the record indicates that other site limitations already affect expansion opportunities.

4. **The use will not create an excessive burden on parks, schools, streets, water supply, public drainage systems and other public facilities and utilities which serve or are proposed to serve in the area:**

   Finding: The proposed residential use is not expected to create a significant burden on public infrastructure.

5. **The structure and sites shall have an appearance that will not have an adverse effect on adjacent properties:**

   Finding: The site is expected to remain neat and orderly in appearance.

6. **The road on which the project is proposed is adequate to handle increased traffic during operation, and that the use will not cause traffic hazards or congestion:**

   Finding: 127th Street is adequate to handle traffic associated with a non-farm residence.

7. **Existing businesses nearby will not be adversely affected because of curtailment of customer trade brought about by intrusion of noise, glare, odor, or general unsightliness:**

   Finding: There should not be any negative impacts related to the intrusion of noise, glare, odor or general unsightliness upon nearby existing businesses.

8. **That the establishment of the use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding vacant property uses predominant to the area:**

   Finding: The surrounding property is predominantly in agricultural use and is expected to remain so. The existence of this facility and land use should not impact agricultural operations nor commercial/industrial develop.

9. **That adequate utilities, drainage and other necessary facilities have been or are being provided:**

   Finding: Any necessary utilities, drainage, septic systems or other facilities will be addressed prior to and as a condition of issuance of any land use permit.

10. **That adequate measures have been or will be taken to prevent or control rodents, insects, offensive odors, fumes, dust, noise, and vibration in order that none of these will constitute a nuisance, and that adequate measures have been or will be taken to prevent negative impacts on surface water, groundwater, and air quality, and that measures have been taken to control lighted signs and other lights in such a manner that no disturbance to neighboring properties will result:**

    Finding: The site is expected to remain neat and orderly in appearance. As such, the site should not have a negative impact on neighboring properties with noise, dust, appearance, and other nuisances or impacts.

Conditional Use #CUP-26-008 Toby Molitor PID# 09-0384-000

The applicant seeks permission to construct and operate a facility specifically for the purposes of growing and processing cannabis product on his Glenwood Township parcel of land identified by PID# 09-0384-000. This indoor grow and processing facility is to be located approximately nine hundred (900) feet north of State Highway 55 on 195th Avenue.

Chair Messenger read the full background from the Staff Report.

Director Green noted that this is the first application in Pope County for a cannabis related business. He asked Chair Messenger for 5 minutes to allow the PAC to review the project narrative provided by the applicant. The project narrative was passed out to the PAC and audience, noting that the original was presented by the Applicant in a very small font on the application, and the copy provided is in font size 14. Five minutes was made available by Chair Messenger for the document to be reviewed.

Director Green read the staff comments from the Staff Report, as well as the State regulation statutes, ordinances and the performance standards in the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance relating to cannabis production and use. He also reviewed the licensing and registration process that the applicant must navigate, and stated that we (PAC) don't have to over-analyze this process, as licensure is issued by the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). The PAC's job is to verify if the land use proposal conforms with the locally adopted land use standards.

Additionally, the Pope County Board of Commissioners adopted Ordinance 202405 in December of 2024, regulating cannabis businesses & events in Pope County. The Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance was amended at the same time to account for locating cannabis related business and land uses.

Director Green explained our due process effort including that Staff identifies the names of property owners within the notification range for conditional use permits. By MN Statute, Public Notices are mailed to owners of record within 1320 feet of the property applying for a conditional use permit.

After reading Minnesota Statute 342.28 Subdivision 1, as well as section 10.31.2 of the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance, Director Green stated that based on the application materials, site review and the findings provided, that Staff recommends approval of this conditional use permit with the conditions listed in the Staff Report with the exception of Condition #6, which should be deleted due to redundancy. He also noted that the Applicant must still go through the OCM licensure process.

Chair Messenger asked if the Committee had any questions for Staff. Member Isdahl asked about the required setbacks from public buildings. Director Green responded that the setback requirements were addressed in the Pope County Land Use Ordinance, which are:

1. 1000 feet from a school
2. 500 feet from a day care facility
3. 500 feet of a residential treatment facility
4. 500 feet from an attraction within a public park that is regularly used by minors, including a playground or athletic field
5. 500 feet from another cannabis business*
6. 500 feet of a church

*Except during a legally licensed and permitted Cannabis Event.

Chair Messenger invited the applicants to come up to the presentation table. The Applicant, Toby Molitor, came to the table and introduced Mitch Grundman, who would be Mr. Molitor's partner in business. Mr. Molitor then clarified the proposed method of their use and recycling of water. They will use a reverse osmosis system to purify their water, which the State looks at as clean wastewater after going through the RO cycle. They will, however, comply with the MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) regulations for their wastewater disposal. Mr. Molitor also addressed condition #1, stating that they have no plans for on-site sales, extraction, burning of material or hazardous material disposal on-site. Their intent is to grow & produce pre-rolled cigarettes. Their facility will not have windows, so there is no need for blackout or shading curtains.

Mr. Molitor asked the PAC to reconsider Condition 2A, and asked for a 60 – 90 day window to prove that an industrial-grade carbon filtration system is not going to be needed to mitigate odors during the growing and drying process. He explained that he is asking for that length of time to allow for a complete plant growth cycle, and that a filtration system will not be needed because of the way that the building is already planned with HVAC systems to offset odors and maintain a specific humidity.

Member Isdahl asked what their business model is. Mr. Grundman replied that they will be a business to business model, selling directly to other retailers, with no sales to the public. Transportation of the finished product will be through licensed couriers. Packaging & processing of the product was discussed.

Commissioner Wildman asked about the use of the plant after the flower is removed, which brought forth discussion of the percentage of plant that is processed and used (the flower), the remainder (sticks and stems), disposal of the waste product, which is highly regulated, will be off-site, and building security and surveillance.

Mr. Molitor explained the three reasons he chose the property, as closeness to three phase utility, the presence of an existing commercial facility across the road with lights, and the location of the City's wastewater facility, as well as the presence of local farms routinely spreading turkey manure nearby.

Member Barkeim said that it sounds like the facility is very secure. The Applicants discussed the need for security to prevent contamination of any bacteria or pathogens. Employees will be required to wear gowns & will enter the growing rooms through a separate vestibule to lessen the chances of them from bringing in outside contamination. There are also security cameras planned for every point of entrance to the facility.

Commissioner Wildman asked how far are they away from a build time? The Applicants replied that their plan is to break ground on September 1st. Director Green stated that that is an aggressive goal. OCM requires the building to be "built to code", but we are not a code county. There was further discussion of the HVAC system & maintaining the proper humidity for the plants.

Chairman Messenger opened the public hearing at 8:02 p.m. and asked for anyone to speak in favor of this conditional use permit. Mr. Gene Egdorf spoke in favor, stating that he has tillable land nearby, and doesn't have a problem with this. He is not worried about his property values being negatively impacted. Hearing no comments opposed, Chairman Messenger closed the public hearing at 8:03 p.m.

The site team comprised of Board Member Barkeim and Messenger. Member Messenger said that this was a good spot – close to transportation, across from the ammonia tanks & not good for housing. Member Barkeim agreed.

Motion:

Chairman Messenger seeks a motion. Member Barkeim moved to offer a recommendation of approval, subject to the conditions as presented in the staff report, with condition 2-A amended to provide a 90-day window to prove that carbon filtration is not needed, with a 30 day window for installation if needed, and deleting condition 6. This was seconded by Member Isdahl. The motion carried unanimously at 8:10 p.m.

Proposed Ordinance Amendments

Director Green began his presentation of the Land Use Controls Ordinance Amendments at 8:11 p.m. He presented that the proposed amendments modernize the ordinance by clarifying definitions, updating shoreland development standards, creating clear regulations for guest accommodations and accessory structures, improving environmental protections and providing more predictable standards for residential development while maintaining protection of Pope County's shoreland resources. The following Sections are proposed for amendments:

Section 2.2 Definitions

Section 4.6.1 - 4.6.9 Shoreland Performance Standards

Section 4.6.13, 5.6.1 Accessory Structures

Sections 4 - 8 Zoning Districts Permitted, Conditional and Interim Uses

Section 10.8 Guest Cottage & Guest Quarters

Section 10.10 Impervious Surface

Director Green summarized the amendments as follows:

- Clarifies definitions for accessory structures, guest quarters, and vegetative buffers.
- Updates shoreland development standards, including lot size, lot width, setbacks, septic area requirements, and structure placement.
- Establishes standards for multiple dwelling units on a single parcel, including density and septic requirements.
- Modernizes controlled access lot regulations with standards for ownership, docks, parking, storage, and shoreline protection.
- Creates clear standards for guest cottages and guest quarters, including size, location, and design requirements.
- Revises accessory structure regulations, including size allowances based on distance from the shoreline and exemptions for agricultural and appurtenant structures.
- Updates permitted, conditional, and interim uses across shoreland, residential, and agricultural districts to improve consistency and align with current development practices.
- Adds educational and religious facilities as Conditional Uses in the A-l and A-2 Agricultural Districts, allowing these community-serving uses to be considered through the Conditional Use Permit process while ensuring review of potential impacts on surrounding agricultural operations and neighboring properties.

After general discussion, Chair Isdahl seeks a motion. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the Land Use Control Ordinance Amendments as presented, which was seconded by Member Kannegiesser. The motion passes unanimously.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Member Isdahl to adjourn the Planning Advisory Commission meeting, with a second by Member Kannegiesser. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh A. Nelson/Senior Administrative Associate
Pope County Land & Resource Management

David Green/Director
Pope County Land & Resource Management