Minutes for the Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, September 25, 2025

Acting Chair Derr called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

PRESENT: Andress, Derr, Granger, Kelly, Klein, Petty

ABSENT: Kleissler

STAFF: Rachel Juba, Community Development Director
Max Gort, Associate Planner

Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes for the Planning Commission Meeting of July 10, 2025

Commissioner Klein made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Andress, to approve the minutes for the Planning Commission meeting of July 10, 2025.

All ayes.
Motion carried.

Public Hearing: Site Plan and Interim Use Permit – Cedar Creek Energy

Associate Planner Gort presented background on the requests from Cedar Creek Energy for site plan approval and an interim use permit (IUP) for a solar farm on property located at 7776 157th Street North. The applicant is proposing to install a 3.9-acre solar farm on 5 acres of land in the northwest corner of the 38.25-acre property. The placement of the solar farm in the northwest corner of the property was chosen by the applicant due to the continuity of buildable area, and is generally in a location that minimizes visual impact on adjacent properties. The solar panels will be mounted on a single-axis tracker system, meaning that they move facing east to west following the sun throughout the day. The site plan generally meets all ordinance requirements, including required setbacks, except for the required planting height of six-foot tall vegetation. The landscape plan currently shows four-foot tall trees planted for screening on the west and southeast sides of the solar farm, which shall be revised to show six-foot tall vegetation prior to the issuance of a building permit. The application also met all criteria necessary to approve a solar farm interim use permit. Staff recommended that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing and take all comments, and recommended that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the requests to the City Council.

Commissioner Petty asked about the placement of the solar farm in the northwest corner of the property, further away from the buildings in the southeast corner of the property. Community Development Director Juba stated that the buildings in the southeast corner of the property are for a butcher business, not a home, and detailed the steep slopes and wetlands that constrain the buildable area of the property. Petty asked about the gap in screening in the southwest corner of the solar farm. Juba said that there is sufficient existing vegetation in the southwest area of the property, and that the

ordinance requires adequate vegetative screening allowing for utilization of existing vegetation. Juba stated that the Planning Commission may recommend additional conditions with the IUP request.

Commissioner Graner asked about the property to the west and its current function. Juba said that the property to the west is a tree farm.

Alex Gast, COO of Cedar Creek Energy, introduced himself as the applicant, and stated that they are willing to plant trees on the southeast corner of the solar farm if the Planning Commission recommends it.

Commissioner Andress asked if there are measures in place to mitigate glare. Gast said that the panels utilize an anti-reflective coating, and that the distance away from view of adjacent properties will make it difficult for anyone to be impacted by glare.

Acting Chair Derr asked if the motors from the tracking system will generate noise. Gast said that they will make very little noise, as the motors move at the speed of the sun.

Commissioner Klein asked about the applicant's vegetation establishment and management plan (VMP), which staff was recommending be revised to better suit the soil conditions. Gast said that a company called Natural Resource Services drafted the VMP, and will be managing the site including mowing a few times per year. Gast said there could be an opportunity for bringing in sheep to graze.

Acting Chair Derr opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 PM

John Lutz, 7776 157th Street N, introduced himself as the property owner. Lutz stated that he envisioned a different solar farm project than what was presented in the application, and asked for ways to reduce the setbacks and/or construct additional solar arrays.

Acting Chair Derr closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 PM

Commissioner Petty stated that the ordinance revision process has concluded at this point, and that the discussion at this meeting should not be related to the ordinance requirements themselves. Commissioner Klein said that he agreed and that the current application meets ordinance requirements. Petty said that the applicant could potentially revise the plans to increase the acreage of the solar array by a small amount. Juba stated that if the applicant wished to revise the plans, they'll need to withdraw the application that the Planning Commission is reviewing and resubmit.

Commissioner Petty made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Klein, to recommend approval of the site plan and IUP requests, subject to the conditions in the resolution and the IUP.

All ayes.
Motion carried.

The request will be reviewed by the City Council at their October 6, 2025 meeting.

New Business

Juba said that the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2025.

Old Business

None.

Adjournment

Commissioner Klein made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Andress, to adjourn at 7:49 PM.

All ayes.
Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Max Gort, Associate Planner