

City Of East Grand Forks Planning And Zoning Commission

600 DeMers Avenue * East Grand Forks, MN 56721
(218) 773-0124 * (218) 773-2507 fax nellis@egf.mn

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AGENDA Wednesday January 14, 2026 NOON

MEMBERS

Rasmussen _____ Audette _____ Grassel _____ Casmey _____
Erickson _____ Finney _____ Ortzman _____

- A. CALL TO ORDER
- B. ROLL CALL
- C. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM
- D. SWEAR IN NEW MEMBERS
- E. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON
 - 1. Nominations
 - 2. Close Nominations
 - 3. Written Ballot If More Than One Nominee
 - 4. Results Declared
- F. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON
 - 1. Nominations
 - 2. Close Nominations
 - 3. Written Ballot If More Than One Nominee
 - 4. Results Declared
- G. ELECTION OF SECRETARY
 - 1. Nominations
 - 2. Close Nominations
 - 3. Written Ballot If More Than One Nominee
 - 4. Results Declared
- H. SET MEETING TIME AND DAY OF WEEK
- I. ADJOURNMENT

City Of East Grand Forks Planning And Zoning Commission

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AGENDA

WEDNESDAY January 14, 2026 – 12:00 P.M.

MEMBERS

Grassel _____ Erickson _____ Audette _____ Ortzman _____
Rasmussen _____ Casmey _____ Finney _____

- A. CALL TO ORDER
- B. CALL OF ROLL
- C. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM
- D. COMMUNICATION:

None.
- E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - 1. Matter Of Approval Of The November 12, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes Of The East Grand Forks Planning Commission
- F. OLD BUSINESS

None.
- G. NEW BUSINESS
 - 1. **PUBLIC HEARING.** Consider the Application from ISD 595 to Rezone Lot 1 Block 1 Scholarship Addition from R-1 to PUDEllis

Individuals with disabilities, language barriers or other needs who plan to attend the meeting and will need special accommodations should contact Nancy Ellis, ADA Coordinator at (218)-773-2208. Please contact us at least 48 hours before the meeting to give our staff adequate time to make arrangements. Also, materials can be provided in alternative formats: large print, Braille, cassette tape, or on computer disk for people with disabilities or with limited English proficiency (LEP) by contacting the ADA Coordinator (218)-773-2208 five (5) days prior to the meeting.

2. **PUBLIC HEARING.** Consider the Application from ISD 595 for a Special Use Permit to construct a ground mounted solar powered energy system at Central Middle SchoolEllis

H. OTHER BUSINESS

NONE.

I. ADJOURNMENT

**Chad Grassel, Chad Erickson, Rick Audette, Brad Ortzman,
Cody Rasmussen, Donald Casmeay, and Zach Finney**

Individuals with disabilities, language barriers or other needs who plan to attend the meeting and will need special accommodations should contact Nancy Ellis, ADA Coordinator at (218)-773-2208. Please contact us at least 48 hours before the meeting to give our staff adequate time to make arrangements. Also, materials can be provided in alternative formats: large print, Braille, cassette tape, or on computer disk for people with disabilities or with limited English proficiency (LEP) by contacting the ADA Coordinator (218)-773-2208 five (5) days prior to the meeting.

**EAST GRAND FORKS
REGULAR
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Wednesday, November 12, 2025 – 12:00 Noon**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Audette, President called the November 12, 2025 meeting of the East Grand Forks Planning Commission to order at 12:00 pm

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Commissioners: Richard Audette, Chad Erickson, Donald Casmeay, Cody Rasmussen, Brad Ortzman and Chad Grassel

Absent: Zach Finney

Guest(s) present: Ben Ehreth, MPO Director

Staff present: Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks City Planner; Brenda Ault, Executive Assistant; Reid Huttunen, City Administrator

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

A quorum was present.

COMMUNICATION

1. Need a Board Member to represent the City on the Polk County Planning Commission.

CP Ellis informed the group that the meeting is held the 4th Friday at 9 am in Crookston, Zach Finney has indicated he would be able to do it. She wanted to check with the Commission to see if any other members would be interested in the position. The group indicated that they would be happy to have Finney be on the Commission. Audette offered to replace/backup if Finney cannot.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A Motion was made by Commissioner Rasmussen, Seconded by Commissioner Erickson to approve the minutes from the July 16, 2025 Regular Meeting M/S/P-Rasmussen, Erickson; 6-0, mc.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Public Hearing. Final Approval of the Replat of Lots 3 and 4, Block 4, Garden Valley 3rd Addition and Lot 1 Block 2, Garden Valley 4th Addition**

CP Ellis stated that the City is requesting the Planning Commission consider the Preliminary and possible final approval of the above replat.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Erickson, Seconded by Commissioner Ortzman to open the Public Hearing. M/S/P- Erickson, Ortzman; 6-0, mc.

CP Ellis informed the Commissioners that the property owners, Jeff & Melanie Holbeck, Zach & Jessica Zorn are requesting final approval of the Replat of Lots 3 and 4 Block 4 Garden Valley 3rd Addition and Lot 1, Block 2 Garden Valley 4th Addition into Lots A and B.

SITE ZONING/LAND USE: R-1 is the current zoning – The current lots have single family homes on them and the shared property line in between the two lots is moving west.

No one from the Public was present to comment.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Erickson to close the Public Hearing, Commissioner Audette seconded the Motion. M/S/P- Erickson, Ortzman; 6-0, mc.

CP Ellis stated that the surrounding Zoning/Land Use is:

- North: R-1 zoning and PUD, single family homes and townhomes
- West: R-1 zoning, single family homes
- South: R-1 zoning, single family homes
- East: R-1 zoning, single family homes

This request is a simple subdivision, meaning a plat creating two lots or more simply moving a property line. The Holbecks have asked Zorns to purchase some of their property and they have accepted. The property line between the two will move approximately 11 to 12 feet to the west. Both properties will still meet the R-1 zoning requirements for single family homes; including lot size, setbacks and impervious coverage. No Right-of-Way or easements will change.

She recommends approving the plat with the following conditions:

- 1) Submit digital files to the planning office for GIS.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Ortzman to approve the plat with the above conditions; Commissioner Rasmussen seconded the Motion. M/S/P- Erickson, Ortzman; RCV: Rasmussen-Y, Casmey-Y, Audette-Y, Erickson-Y, Grassel-Y, Ortzman-Y:6-0, mc.

2. Introduction of the new MPO Director and discussion of MPO and future studies, including the newly started Socioeconomic study (instead of Land Use Plan)

CP Ellis introduced Ben Ehreth to the Commissioners and invited him to speak to the group. Ehreth talked about his past work experience and thanked the Commissioners because he had been the City Planner in a few places before he came to work here and knows how important the Planning Commission is in the MPO process.

He touched on some of the things the MPO has coming up, the Socioeconomic Study, long range plans for transit, bike/ped and freight, the 20-year plan called the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and long term transportation needs. The Federal Government requires every 5 years, a transportation study of congestions areas, costs to maintain all modes of transportation, and areas in need of expansion

For the Socioeconomic study, the consultants are projecting out for 2055, job numbers in the area, travel demand model, patterns in the region, existing roadway network, homes being built, jobs added.

CP Ellis explained to the Board, because there are several new members on the Board, these studies are important. They define how a community grows; one misconception was that East Grand Forks traveled into Grand Forks more than they came to East Grand Forks. However, a study showed that the traffic between Grand Forks and East Grand Forks runs 50/50. Sacred Heart, Riverside Christian have a lot of students from the ND side. Crystal Sugar, the school systems and medical systems, have a lot of employees traveling to this side of the river.

CA Huttunen stated that the traffic impact from Agristo, a Belgium-based company, is building its first North American potato processing plant in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The \$450 million facility will create 300–350 jobs and process frozen potato products like french fries and hashbrowns. They will be storing a lot of the potatoes in warehouses in East Grand Forks; this will create a significant increase in traffic between the two cities. Carter Hunter, the Grand Forks Traffic Engineer, is studying transportation issues on the Grand Forks side near the site. However, the movement of freight, specifically the hauling of potatoes, may need to be studied at a regional level.

3. ADDED ITEM: Approve the City's proposed acquisition of Parcel no. 83.02308.00 and verify the proposed acquisition by the City of East Grand Forks is in compliance with the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

EAST GRAND FORKS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, November 12, 2025

CA Huttunen stated that the land is owned by Simplot, the City is purchasing the land and he needs a motion to put on the record that the sale and the property meets the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

CP Ellis stated that the item is in compliance with the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. 1.4 Manage growth and development in a manner that is fiscally responsible. And 2.4 Create and/or implement programs to facilitate the redevelopment and preservation of the identified sites through private/public partnerships, both support this motion.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Rasmussen to approve the proposed acquisition of Parcel No. 83.02308.00 and the Commission has verified that the proposed acquisition by the City of East Grand Forks is in compliance with the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Commissioner Erickson seconded the Motion. M/S/P- Rasmussen, Erickson; RCV: Rasmussen-Y, Casmey-Y, Audette-Y, Erickson-Y, Grassel-Y, Ortzman-Y:6-0, mc.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

A Motion was made by Commissioner Erickson to adjourn the meeting, at 12:32, Commissioner Ortzman seconded the Motion. M/S/P- Erickson, Ortzman; 6-0, mc.

Respectfully submitted by,
Brenda Ault
Executive Assistant

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Planning Commission of East Grand Forks has scheduled two Public Hearings to consider the application from ISD 595 East Grand Forks Public School District to install a ground mounted solar energy system. First, it must hold a public hearing to rezone Lot 1 Block 1 Scholarship Addition, where South Point Elementary and Central Middle School are located, from Single Family Residential (R-1) to Planned Unit Development (PUD). A PUD zoning district allows for a ground mounted solar energy system with a Special Use Permit or SUP. Then, if the rezoning of this lot is approved, the Planning Commission will next hold a public hearing to consider approval of the Special Use Permit (SUP), which is required for a ground mounted solar energy system.

These two Public Hearings are scheduled for Wednesday January 14, 2026 at 12:00 P.M. NOON in the East Grand Forks City Hall Training Room, located at 600 DeMers Avenue, East Grand Forks, MN.

Reid Huttunen
City Administrator
City of East Grand Forks, MN
(Publish January 7, 2026)

City Of East Grand Forks
Planning And Zoning Commission

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(218) 773-0124 * (218) 773-2507 fax nellis@egf.mn

Memo

To: Planning Commission
From: Nancy Ellis, City Planner
Date: 01/14/2026
Re: Rezone of Lot 1 Block1 Scholarship Addition

GENERAL INFORMATION

APPLICANTS/PROPERTY OWNERS: ISD 595 East Grand Forks School District

REQUESTED ACTION: Applicant is requesting approval to rezone from R-1 to PUD to allow for construction of a ground mounted solar energy system on school property.

SITE ZONING/LAND USE: R-1 is the current zoning; South Point Elementary and Central Middle School are located on the lot.

SURROUNDING ZONING/LAND USE:

North: R-1 zoning, residential housing
West: Out of City limits, homes and farmland
South: Out of City limits, farmland
East: Out of City limits, flood control project and farmland

LOCATION: East of Bygland Road and on the south end of the city limits; flood control project borders the east property line

ISD 595/East Grand Forks School District has received grant funding to construct a ground mounted solar energy system on school property. They have chosen the area behind Central Middle School and southeast of the tennis courts to construct said

system. This location is the best location for the system and rezoning to PUD to allow for the construction with a Special Use Permit would not alter the use of the property nor affect the neighboring properties.

The Planning Commission should make its recommendation based on the following:

- Is this an appropriate zoning for this property?
Staff Comment: It would be appropriate to zone the property from R-1 to PUD. This would be best location for this type of system, as ground mounted systems take up considerable space. This location behind the school and south of the tennis courts would be hidden and/or barely seen by surrounding homes and properties.
- How would this zoning fit with the current City Comprehensive Plan?
Staff Comment: The City's Comprehensive Plan is comprised of the following plan elements: 2040 Land Use Plan, 2012 Greenway Plan Update, 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, and the 2009 River Forks Downtown Plan Update. The 2050 Land Use Plan Update was adopted in the fall of 2022. The Plan provided growth scenarios for the City out thirty years. The plan does show a need to consider other types of energy systems to operate large energy users in the area. This does fit with the City's current Comprehensive Plan.
- How does this zoning fit into the current zoning in the area?
Staff Comment: PUD uses is consistent with the current zoning map. If the property is rezoned to PUD, it would NOT greatly change the fit and feel of the area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approving the rezone of Lot 1 Block 1 Scholarship Addition from R-1 to PUD to allow for the construction of a ground mounted solar energy system on site.

EAST GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #595

1420 4TH AVENUE NW

EAST GRAND FORKS, MN 56721

(218) 773-3494

To: EGF Planning and Zoning

From: Kevin Grover



Re: District property rezoning

Date: 12-17-25

East Grand Forks Public Schools is requesting that the district owned property that Central middle School and South Point Elementary schools sit on including all surrounding district owned properties be rezoned from residential to Planned Unit Development (PUD). The basis for this request is to allow a solar array to meet city criteria according to ordinance No. 42, 4th series. The ordinance has ground mounted solar energy systems prohibited in residential districts. The proposed project would put an array on the back side (northeast) of Central Middle School in essence between the two schools and towards the edge closest to the dike. This means there is little potential for any development other than school sponsored projects around this array. The school and Ziegler Energy (contractor) are meeting and working with the City of East Grand Forks to ensure that all facets of the project work to meet the needs of the city and are compatible with your infrastructure.

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Planning And Zoning Commission

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Memo

To: Planning Commission

From: Nancy Ellis, City Planner

Date: 1/8/2026

Re: Special Use Permit request to construct ground mounted solar energy system

GENERAL INFORMATION

APPLICANTS/PROPERTY OWNERS: ISD 595 East Grand Forks School District

REQUESTED ACTION: Applicant is requesting approval of a Special Use Permit to construct a ground mounted solar energy system behind Central Middle School. A request to rezone the property from the R-1 zoning district to PUD to allow for a ground mounted system as a Special Use must be approved before the SUP permit is valid.

SITE ZONING/LAND USE: R-1 is the current zoning. Rezoned to PUD for SUP application

SURROUNDING ZONING/LAND USE:

- North: R-1 zoning, residential housing
- West: Out of City limits, homes and farmland
- South: Out of City limits, farmland
- East: Out of City limits, flood control project and farmland

GENERAL COMMENTS

ISD 595/East Grand Forks School District has received grant funding to construct a ground mounted solar energy system on school property. They have chosen the area behind Central Middle School and southeast of the tennis courts to construct said system. This location will meet the setback requirements and will not be seen by most property owners. To construct the system, the following must happen: the property must be rezoned from R-1 Single Family Zoning District to PUD Planned Unit Development to allow for a ground mounted system with a Special Use Permit (SUP); if rezoned, they need to have his SUP approved. I have listed the

criteria for the special use permit process below and I am including the answers to the SUP from ISD 595. Since this is an existing property most of the criteria should already be met.

SPECIAL USE PERMIT PROCESS

Within City Code is a section that lists “Criteria For Granting Special Use Permits”. This section states that the applicant must show that standards and criteria in Section 152.022 of the City Code will be satisfied. These standards and criteria shall include both general requirements for all special uses and, insofar as practicable, requirements specific to each designated special use. In granting a special use permit, the city council shall consider the effect of the proposed use upon the health, safety, and general welfare of occupants of surrounding lands. Among other things, the planning commission and city council shall make the following findings where applicable:

1. The use will not create an excessive burden on public facilities and utilities, which serve or are proposed to serve the area.
2. The use will be sufficiently compatible with, or separated by sufficient distance from, or screened from adjacent land uses so that there will be no deterrence to the use or development of adjacent land and uses.
3. Each structure or improvement is so designed and constructed that it is not unsightly in appearance to the extent that it will hinder the orderly and harmonious development of the district wherein proposed.
4. The use is consistent with the purposes of Chapter 152, and the purposes of the zoning district in which the applicant intends to locate the proposed use.
5. The use is not in conflict with the East Grand Forks Land Use Plan.
6. Adequate measures have been taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion, provide adequate access to public roads, and provide sufficient on-site parking.
7. SPECIFIC TO GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR POWER SYSTEMS: They cannot exceed 20 feet in height; located in rear yard only; cannot exceed half the building footprint.

In permitting a new special use permit or alteration upon review of an existing special use permit, the planning commission may recommend, and the city council may impose, in addition to these standards and requirements expressly specified by this Chapter, additional conditions which the planning commission or city council considers necessary to protect the interests of the surrounding area or the City as a whole.

SITE PLAN COMMENTS

Since this site already exists and the use will not change significantly. The site plan for the property and project location must meet the requirements of the Special Use Conditions for ground mounted solar power energy system, including: 1) Not exceeding 20 feet in height; 2) located in the rear yard only; 3) cannot exceed half the building footprint; 4) must meet setback requirements for the underlying district; 5) will not impair sight distance for safe access to the property or other traffic; 6) shall minimize glare to nearby properties. As shown on the site plan, this project meets all the Special Use Permit Conditions listed in the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance 152.400.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approval of the Special Use Permit (SUP) to construct a ground mounted solar power energy system at Central Middle School.

APPLICATION INFORMATION:

I. Application Quantities and Submittal Formats:

- a. One (1) reproducible copy reduced to 11" x 17" of the request and all other supporting documents.
- b. One (1) reproducible copy reduced to 8.5" x 11" of the request and all other supporting documents.

II. Complete Application Submittal Requirements:

Complete applications shall consist of the following site plan and narrative information, unless waived by the Planning Department following a pre application meeting. Information shall be provided in graphic and/or written formats as appropriate. Additional information or modifications may be required by Planning Staff, Planning Commission, or City Council, and additional information may be requested during the review process.

A. Written explanation on how the proposed Special Use Permit will comply with each of the following standards:

- 1. The use will not create an excessive burden on public facilities and utilities, which serve or are proposed to serve the area.
The solar array will not create an excessive burden on public facilities or utilities. It will utilize the school's existing electrical service infrastructure. No additional water, sewer, or gas services are required.
- 2. The use will be sufficiently compatible with, or separated by sufficient distance from, or screened from adjacent land uses so that there will be no deterrence to the use or development of adjacent land and uses.
The array will be located on school property. It will be set back from property lines and fenced in to maintain compatibility with surrounding school amenities.
- 3. Each structure or improvement is so designed and constructed that it is not unsightly in appearance to the extent that it will hinder the orderly and harmonious development of the district wherein proposed.
The solar array will be professionally installed, with uniform panels and fixed tilt racking system designed to blend with the school's open space. It will not be unsightly or hinder the orderly development of the district.
- 4. The use is consistent with the purposes of City Code 152, and the purposes of the zoning district in which the applicant intends to locate the proposed use.
The proposed use aligns with City Code 152 and the zoning district's intent by supporting sustainable energy initiatives and reducing reliance on non-renewable resources. It is an accessory use to the school's educational and operational functions.
- 5. The use is not in conflict with the East Grand Forks Land Use Plan.
The East Grand Forks Land Use Plan emphasizes sustainability and renewable energy adoption as part of its long-term vision. It supports development that reduces environmental impact and

encourages energy efficiency. Recent zoning updates also allow solar installations, reflecting the city's commitment to renewable energy and compatibility with land use goals.

- ___ 6. Adequate measures have been taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion, provide adequate access to public roads, and provide sufficient onsite parking. ***The solar array will not generate additional traffic. Existing school access points and parking facilities are sufficient. No new driveways or curb cuts are required.***

- ___ 7. All buildings/structures must meet the intent of the State Building Code and/or fire codes. ***All equipment will meet State Building Code and fire code requirements. Electrical work will comply with the National Electrical Code and be inspected by licensed professionals.***

- ___ 8. Documentation that describes the proposed Special Use Permit's potential effects or impacts on public facilities, utilities, and services, including, but not limited to:
 - (1) Streets. ***No impact; no new traffic generated.***
 - (2) Law enforcement. ***No impact; no security concerns beyond standard school property measures.***
 - (3) Ambulance/emergency services. ***No impact; installation does not affect emergency access.***
 - (4) Fire protection. ***Minimal impact; array will include proper disconnects and labeling per fire code.***
 - (5) City administration. ***No significant impact; routine permitting only.***
 - (6) Schools. ***Positive impact; provides educational opportunities and reduces energy costs.***
 - (7) Utilities. ***Reduces electrical demand on the grid; no additional utility services required.***

B. Specific submittal requirements related to the proposed Special Use Permit as identified by Planning Staff following a pre-application meeting:

C. Site boundaries, buildings, structures and other improvements shall be identified on-site with a current certificate of survey, prepared and signed by a Minnesota licensed land surveyor, depicting the following:

- ___ 1. Scale of plan (engineering scale only).

