**Cannon Falls Planning Commission**

**Regular Meeting**

**City Council Chambers**

**July 21, 2025**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Chair Diane Johnson; Commissioners Jesse Fox, Brian Douglas, Chris Nobach, and Isaac Naatz

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** All members were in attendance

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jon Radermacher, City Administrator; Shelley Ryan, City Attorney; Bill Angerman, City Engineer; and Joe Berg, Police Lieutenant

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Johnson at 6:30 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL**

Roll call was conducted. Chair Johnson and Commissioners Douglas, Naatz, Nobach, and Fox were in attendance.

1. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Douglas, seconded by Commissioner Naatz and unanimously carried, to approve the agenda as presented.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 12, 2025**

This item was discussed following discussion of Item 5.

A motion was made by Commissioner Nobach, seconded by Commissioner Fox and unanimously carried, to approve the meeting minutes as drafted.

1. **PUBLIC INPUT**

Chair Johnson reviewed the public input procedure. There was no public input regarding items not listed on the agenda.

1. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Public Hearings were conducted following discussion of Item 4.

1. **Data Center Text Amendment.**

City Administrator Radermacher provided background information. He reported that a data center land use application was submitted several months ago relating to an area being considered for annexation into the City of Cannon Falls. He referenced ongoing discussion of a process to evaluate this application, noting that data center land uses are not currently addressed by the City Code. He stated that staff recommends allowing these uses in I-2 zoning districts as a conditional use.

Chair Johnson opened the Public Hearing for this item at 6:35 p.m. No one spoke during the Public Hearing. Chair Johnson closed the Public Hearing at 6:36 p.m.

Commissioner Naatz suggested considering the text amendment to be a living document that may need to be readdressed in the future, noting that the definition of a data center could change drastically over time. Administrator Radermacher expressed agreement with this approach.

Commissioner Douglas spoke in support of taking action on the proposed text amendment, in order to put protections in place and allow the data center application evaluation process to move forward.

Commissioner Fox expressed agreement with establishing a framework for evaluating data center applications in terms of requiring a Conditional Use Permit for these types of land uses in I-2 zoning districts.

Chair Johnson suggested considering restrictions or limitations on certain data center activities.

1. **Gravel Driveways Text Amendment.**

City Administrator Radermacher provided background information and referenced past discussion of a potential text amendment to allow gravel driveways on estate lots. He detailed the process of drafting the proposed text amendment and reviewed recent revisions to this language.

It was noted that the text amendment would apply to single-family and two-family lots with a minimum of two acres, and the areas utilized for driveways would be at least 100 feet in length. It was noted that the surface must have pavement or concrete for at least 25 feet from the street access and for at least 25 feet leading to the garage entry or parking space.

Chair Johnson opened the Public Hearing for this item at 6:43 p.m. No one spoke during the Public Hearing. Chair Johnson closed the Public Hearing at 6:44 p.m.

Commissioner Douglas referenced the proposed language, noting his understanding that all driveways are required to be paved. He recommended lengthening the minimum driveway length. Administrator Radermacher clarified that the existing standards relating to paved driveways would remain in place. He stated that the proposed text amendment would only apply to large lots of 2 acres or more with long driveways. He commented that the Planning Commission could offer revisions in terms of the minimum driveway length for which a partial gravel driveway would be allowed.

Chair Johnson asked whether a second Public Hearing would be required, if major revisions to the text amendment language are proposed. It was clarified that a second Public Hearing would not be required for minor language revisions.

Commissioner Nobach asked whether the 25 feet of paving from the street access would apply in all situations and provided examples. City Engineer Angerman stated that, while County and MnDOT right-of-way lengths vary, the proposed 25 feet should more than cover most instances.

Commissioner Nobach asked why single-family lots and two-family lots are referenced in the proposed text amendment language. Administrator Radermacher indicated that this language differentiates residential structures from commercial structures. It was clarified that the proposed text amendment would apply to all zoning districts in which 2-acre or more residential lots are allowed, including Urban Reserve.

Commissioner Nobach asked about the language requiring 25 feet of paving leading to the garage entry or parking space. Administrator Radermacher and City Engineer Angerman provided rationale for this language. Drainage issues and aesthetic considerations were discussed.

Commissioner Douglas asked whether all City streets have curbing. City Engineer Angerman clarified that all new public streets are required to have curbing, noting that the lots under discussion have no public streets. Administrator Radermacher commented that new developments are required to have stormwater management plans in place.

Commissioner Douglas reiterated his recommendation to increase the minimum driveway length. A motion was made by Commissioner Douglas to increase the minimum driveway length to 200 feet. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fox for discussion purposes. Commissioner Nobach commented that this language seems arbitrary. Commissioner Douglas provided rationale for his suggested revision. Commissioner Naatz commented regarding cost considerations, noting that the City wants to encourage development and more affordable housing. Administrator Radermacher commented that there are various factors to consider. He referenced the potential of annexing additional land into the City and discussed the importance of establishing reasonable standards. Commissioner Fox asked how the 100-foot minimum was determined. Administrator Radermacher summarized discussions in this regard. Commissioner Fox asked whether there would be any adverse impacts of revising the minimum to 200 feet.

Mark Sonstegard of JMH Development, representing the applicant, discussed the estate lots in the Timber Ridge development. He discussed the cost of paving and provided an example. He suggested allowing home buyers to have some flexibility in terms of paving options.

Commissioner Nobach spoke in support of the less restrictive language. Following discussion Commissioner Douglas withdrew his motion, and Commissioner Fox withdrew the second.

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1. **DISCUSSION**
2. **Data Center Text Amendment.**

City Attorney Ryan summarized recent discussions and referenced the proposed text amendment language. She detailed minor revisions to the proposed language that were recommended during the recent City Council and Planning Commission work session.

Chair Johnson reiterated her earlier suggestion to consider restrictions or limitations on certain data center operations, such as cryptomining. City Administrator Radermacher reviewed Planning Commission options in terms of providing recommendations. City Attorney Ryan provided additional guidance relating to the City’s ability to address concerns during the Conditional Use Permit evaluation and approval process.

A motion was made by Commissioner Douglas, seconded by Commissioner Nobach and unanimously carried, to accept the staff recommendations relating to minor language revisions as outlined and recommend that the City Council approve the proposed zoning text amendment pertaining to data center land uses, as amended.

1. **Gravel Driveways Text Amendment.**

A motion was made by Commissioner Naatz, seconded by Commissioner Nobach and unanimously carried, to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed text amendment relating to gravel driveways, as drafted.

1. **ADJOURN**

A motion was made by Commissioner Fox, seconded by Commissioner Douglas and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.