

**Royalton Township Working Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**6052 Royalton Road, Braham, MN 55006**  
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**11 March 2026**  
**Approved**

7:00 p.m., 11 March 2026, Chair Jeff Schlaeger convened the Royalton Township working planning commission meeting with Members Pete Belland, Barb Dreyer and John Graham, and Clerk Duane Swanson present. Zoning Administrator John Kemen, Septic Administrator Amy Thompson, and members of the public also attended.

Chair Schlaeger welcomed Pine County Commissioner Josh Mohr and Pine County Administrator Kelly Schroeder to the meeting and invited them to join members at the table. The purpose of the discussion was to share information about cannabis operations in the township and the regulations thereof. Member Graham reminded the assembly that this is a working meeting for commission members to discuss issues with representatives of Pine County, that it is not a public hearing, and that although members of the public are always welcome to attend, this meeting will not include comments from the public.

Chair Schlaeger asked how the cannabis performance bonds worked. Administrator Schroeder replied that the purpose of the bond is to ensure that, if a business were to fail or close, there would be funds available to the government to close down the site without using public monies. Currently, the bond is \$100,000, which remains in effect for two years after the cessation of operations to ensure that any residual issues can be remediated. Administrator Schroeder noted that she makes regular visits to the site, visits have no set schedule but are not unannounced, and that more extensive visits will occur at the annual permit renewal time. She reported that of the 12 permitted cannabis operations in the county, the Erba operation in Royalton is the only one for which she has received complaints. Current complaints number about 14, emanating from six or seven individuals.

In response to questions, Administrator Schroeder noted that light from the grow lights generally goes upward rather than outward, although certain atmospheric conditions (snow, fog) will spread the light outward. Her night-time visits to the Erba facility have not shown significant outward lighting. Members discussed replacement of plastic coverings, whether or not that constituted new or rebuilding or routine maintenance. Former owners of the property routinely replaced coverings without seeking building permits. Member Dreyer noted that as most plastics age they become opaquer. Administrator Schroeder opined if any permits were required by the state building code, that responsibility would default to the township. Commissioner Mohr responded that, in his opinion, rebuilding would be analogous to reshingling of a residence.

Commissioner Mohr explained that the differences among local jurisdictions in the county result in different procedures and fees. One city or township may have significantly different regulations than an adjacent city or township. Administrator Schroeder addressed smells from cannabis facilities, responding that the Pine County permit restricts smells from drying only. She recounted a visit to the Erba facility: Where drying occurred with vents closed no outside smell was detected. However, inside the structure smell was very evident. Owner Joe Zappa noted that vents in growing structures are open year around, although with greater frequency in summer and fall. Administrator Schroeder noted that if, and when, outdoor growing begins, smells will be evident. She noted that whether or not a township nuisance ordinance would apply would be a question for town legal counsel. She also noted that cannabis operations, for property tax purposes, would be classed as

PB \_\_\_\_\_ BD \_\_\_\_\_ JG \_\_\_\_\_ JMS \_\_\_\_\_ DPS \_\_\_\_\_

commercial or industrial (rates for either class currently are the same).

Administrator Schroeder recounted the history of cannabis permitting, stating that the current ordinance went through various drafts. Because cannabis permits are not issued under conditional or interim use regulations, no public hearing is required. Administrative staff can issue permits as long as conditions outlined as items “a” - “n” in the permit process are met. Commissioner Mohr commented that during the ordinance adoption process, the board sought “reasonable restrictions” but did not want to be “too restrictive” so as to invite litigation. Administrator Schroeder noted that the Minnesota Office of Cannabis Management’s model ordinance and ordinances from other states are very different from Pine County’s.

Members discussed when to communicate with the county, noting that communication can be difficult and sometimes it feels that residents are not being heard. Commissioner Mohr noted that the county has a lot of resources for use by other jurisdictions. Clerk Swanson thanked Administrator Schroeder for responding to questions and for forwarding documents relating to septic and structural issues identified during her visits to current and proposed facilities. Discussion concluded; Chair Schlaeger thanked Administrator Schroeder and Commissioner Mohr for meeting with the commission.

Clerk Swanson thanked Administrator Schroeder for her continued efforts to clean up 1495 Royal Heights Lane. She has sent communications to the real estate agent currently selling the property. At 7:40 p.m., Commissioner Mohr and Administrator Schroeder left the meeting.

Members Belland and Dreyer and Clerk Swanson reported on their very positive visit with legal counsel regarding the proposed updated zoning ordinance. Counsel will draft language clarifying the use of interim and conditional use permits; he accepted the town’s language on lot area requirements and septic distances from lot lines; he accepted the town’s language on a statement acknowledging town building permits in the Shoreland District. He explained why language should not be included requiring notification of properties within certain distances of applicants for interim or conditional use permits (he will include language restating the state law requirements that indemnify the town if state law is followed).

Clerk Swanson reported that local legal counsel will be following up with the board’s directive regarding the nuisances extant at 10696 Pine Bough Road.

At 7:52 p.m., Chair Schlaeger concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane P. Swanson, Clerk/Member

Pete Belland, Supervisor/Member

Barb Dreyer, Member

John Graham, Supervisor/Member

Jeff Schlaeger, Chair/Member