

Royalton Township Working Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
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12 May 2026
Approved

6:30 p.m., 12 May 2026, Chair Jeff Schlaeger convened the Royalton Township working planning commission meeting in the township maintenance building with Members Pete Belland and Barb Dreyer and Clerk Duane Swanson present in the meeting room and Member Jan Patterson present via telephone. Zoning Administrator John Kemen, Septic Administrator Amy Thompson, and members of the public also attended.

Jake Fedder was present to answer questions about Fedder Homes' construction of a new residence at 15131 Brunswick Road. He noted that it is a slab on grade home on a relatively small lot. Part of the lot is floodplain. A site permit application is waiting to be approved pending discussion about the location of the septic mound. Septic Administrator Thompson noted that, as currently planned, the rock bed would be 20 feet from the property line with the toe extended nearly to the line. She explained that this situation is common on many of the small lots with flood plain issues and that these issues have been resolved with variances. A variance application is on file. Zoning Administrator Kemen and Administrator Thompson recommended approval to the board and that no public hearing be required. Mr. Fedder left the meeting.

Clerk Swanson noted that some additional paperwork had been received for the Johnson/Orvis/Tchida land splits. For the Greeley Road split an abandonment form and some soil borings were submitted. One proposed parcel had only two soil borings and, according to County Administrator Kelly Schroeder and Septic Administrator Thompson, four may be needed. For the Royalton Road split, affidavits are still necessary describing the attachments that will occur so that landlocked parcels are not created by the split.

Joe Zappa was present to respond to questions about his three site permit applications for new construction at 7440 Cabin Drive. Members reviewed his written answers to the town's questions. Site permit applications have been updated to reflect these answers: 1) erba maintains that the activities are agricultural and all Royalton Township building codes and Pine County requirements regarding light-blocking shade curtains will be followed. 2) Required material lists have been added. 3) Indoor/outdoor cultivation limits established by the state of Minnesota will be followed. Mr. Zappa noted that all current growing is considered outdoor, that three new buildings will have building permits and that a septic permit for industrial waste will be the responsibility of the building official and not the septic administrator. Any environmental impact statements or reports would have to be ordered from Pine County. Zoning Administrator Kemen recommended that the board approve these applications. Mr. Zappa left the meeting.

Zoning Administrator Kemen reported on his discussions with Jackson Lee on Mr. Lee's application for an interim use permit to construct a single-family A-frame cabin for seasonal residential use and, possibly, for occasional short-term rental at 11495 State Hwy. 107 (PID 290068000). Mr. Lee was amenable to enlarging the structure to the required 980 square feet. Administrator Kemen noted that a septic system would be needed, that the sketch map needs to be updated, and that this would require a public hearing. Unanswered questions revolve around any state requirements or permits if used as a vacation rental and whether or not a second dwelling may be planned for the parcel. Administrator Kemen will continue to investigate and discuss with the applicant.

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Zoning Administrator Kemen updated the commission on his discussions with Gavin Veigel on his question about constructing a garage on an existing concrete pad at 8738 Greeley Loop (PID 290357000). The pad is too close to the road to conform to current regulations. Commission members, by consensus, appeared to recommend that a required variance not be given. Administrator Kemen will continue discussions with the applicant.

Administrator Kemen noted that no additional information had been supplied about the proposed campground on 5271 Royal River Road. He is awaiting a drawing of the lot demarcating where the shoreland boundary is in relation to any structures or campsites. Pine County zoning may be involved only if activity occurs in the Shoreland District.

Members reviewed the status of the proposed zoning ordinance update, authorizing, by consensus, Supervisor Schlaeger and Clerk Swanson to call legal counsel to use the draft brought to him by Supervisor Belland, Member Dreyer, and Clerk Swanson and to include new wording on the regulation of solar farms and data centers.

Commission members reviewed eight formal citizen complaints filed by John DeGray against erba, Inc./Trawa LLC and the town board of supervisors. Members reviewed each complaint, discussed each with the audience, and concluded the following: 1) The business requires a conditional use permit: Royalton Township followed the procedure outlined by Pine County to transfer its cannabis only zoning regulation to the county. Whether or not the county followed its ordinance and best practice cannot be controlled by the township. 2) The business does not meet Royalton's solar ordinance: The township contends that the fence permit granted by the township is legitimate, that the solar power is part of the fence permit, that there is no sellback of electricity generated, and that it is not a solar array that falls under the ordinance. 3) One of the greenhouses has been changed to a drying/packaging facility that requires a building permit: Building Official Caleb Christenson has determined that this situation does not require a building permit. 4) Towers must meet setbacks and require a conditional use permit: The county's administrative permit and state regulations require the security perimeter; the towers do not meet the definition of a tower per Royalton's ordinance. 5) An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required: Commission members appeared sympathetic that the potential environmental effects may be significant; however, ordering an EIS would fall under the county's jurisdiction and administrative use permit and the authority of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. 6) The fence is out of compliance, a nuisance, and an eyesore: Commission members agree that the fabric covering was not working; the business has removed most of the fabric and is in the process of implementing tighter controls to mitigate unsightliness and the triggering of security alarms. 7) Cannabis operations are not specifically permitted or denied and is still federally illegal; therefore, use should be considered prohibited: Any regulation in this sphere must be part of Pine County's administrative permit. 8) No cannabis business should be in operation until a township ordinance is approved: The township has properly ceded control of cannabis to the county. There is a procedure to reclaim that control but, at this point, the commission has not recommended that the board investigate that option.

The commission then considered Patrice DeGray's complaint that the township needs a cannabis ordinance, that she has drafted one, and encouraged the township to forward it to legal counsel. Members noted that this issue has been a contentious one for a long time, that it has prevented other significant work from being completed, and that other needs must also be addressed. Members also noted the complexity of regulating, monitoring, and inspecting cannabis facilities.

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The commission then considered Denise Weis's complaint on the lack of nuisance control, especially relating to visual appearance, odors, and glare. Her complaint, also shared with Pine County, included photographic documentation and siren calls. Members expressed sympathy with the disruption caused by significant amounts of light and, at times, odors but also noted that the township has limited authority to control these factors. One possible response is for the township to consider a letter to the county board urging it to work toward solutions that mitigate some of the issues.

Members reviewed the issues surrounding erba's distribution of checks to local non-profits during the April board meeting and the root beer float party at the picnic shelter afterwards. Joe Zappa had asked to be on the agenda to present the checks and had received permission to do so. This fulfilled a promise he made earlier to the board to support local nonprofits. The township did not realize that an advertising banner would be displayed at the playground. The consensus of the commission appeared to be that this activity should not occur in the future and that possibly the township should address this issue with the Office of Cannabis Management.

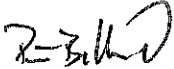
In other updates, Clerk Swanson noted that filing is open for various county offices, that the board has received legal advice on the \$5,000 matching gift opportunity from erba, Inc., and that Travis Kemen and Kent Bombard are making progress on transferring the township to a .gov domain.

At 9:04 p.m., Chair Schlaeger concluded the meeting.

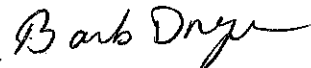
Respectfully submitted,



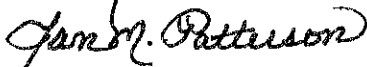
Duane P. Swanson, Clerk/Member



Pete Belland, Supervisor/Member



Barb Dreyer, Member



Jan Patterson, Member

Jeff Schlaeger, Chair/Member

