

January 8, 2026

A meeting of the Plan Commission of the City of Eagle River was called to order at 5:00pm by Mayor Deb Brown.

Roll Call: Adam Grassl, John Hletko, Kim Schaffer, Deb Brown, Brad Adamovich, and Alex Forer. Also in attendance Robin Ginner and Becky Bolte Absent: Mary Horant

Motion by Schaffer, 2nd by Forer to approve the minutes of the 9-4-2025 meeting. Carried, all.

a) PUBLIC HEARING: Riverside Development – approval of preliminary plat application to subdivide Parcel 221-188, Riverside Park, and change the zoning district from Park/Recreation to Single-Two Family Residential. The parcel is described as Part of Government Lot 1, Section 32, and Government Lot 8, Section 29, Township 40 North, Range 10 East: Mayor Brown opened the public hearing at 5:01PM. Ginner read a handout provided to Commissioners and the public summarizing the background of the property and distinction between Riverview and Riverside Park, the property ownership by Vilas County and authority of the City, and the explanation of what the Planning Commission is considering for recommendation to the Council. (Zoning District Change and Subdivision Approval). The petitioner(s) was present with Vilas County representatives, Vilas County Chair, Jerry Burkett, and Vilas County Finance Director, Darcy Smith. A sign-in sheet with name and physical address was available at the entrance into chambers for attendees to sign up to speak at public hearing. Burkett requested we start with comments from those living within 300' of the park first, then City of Eagle River residents, followed by remaining attendees.

Ginner read aloud written public comments received;

Susan Murphy, 132 S Aquila Ct, wants Riverside to remain a public park.

Michael Kunstman, 3667 Kropetz Ln, Town of Washington, strongly opposed the rezoning of the public park for residential development.

Martha Von Kluck, Town of Washington, opposed the rezoning and potential sale.

Debra and Kurt Rekau, Duck Lake, Town of Lincoln, opposed, wants lands that include Riverside Park and the Fairgrounds to continue to be greenspace without buildings.

Steve Favorite, Town of Cloverland, owns home at 107 Silver Lake Rd, requesting that in development of the river front property, consideration for River Trail Commissions plan for an off-road bicycle/pedestrian route. Favorite requests that River Trail Commission preliminary engineering drawings that map the location of the route be entered into the record for public comment.

Warren Kmiec, 4861 Sherburn Rd, Town of Lincoln, not in favor of the change of zoning designation.

Nan Andrews, Town of Lincoln, opposes the rezoning of Riverside Park to Single-Two Family Residential.

Nan Andrews, Town of Lincoln, opposed the rezoning of Riverside Park, citing concerns of irreversible loss of public waterfront, concerns over infrastructure and density, conflicts of interest with Burkett holding dual leadership roles at Vilas County and City of Eagle River, and inappropriate use of zoning power. Urged commission to deny the preliminary plat and maintain current Park/Recreation zoning.

Mayor Brown opened public comments from the attendees and announced a two-minute time limit. Kathryn Craffey refuted the two-minute time limit, stating it should be three minutes. Mayor Brown adjusted to allow public comments limit to three minutes.

Kathryn Craffey, 202 N 3rd St, City of Eagle River, spoke on the 2018-2021 ER Dog Park Committee that was denied use of Riverside Park as a dog park citing Eagle River representative stated the area was overflow parking for fairground. Requested due diligence report showing the development is in the best interest for the community, report of financial gain/loss to the community, and environmental impact report be shared with taxpayers. Presented concerns on City of Eagle River fiscal responsibility, budgetary reporting, and TID administration.

Bill Marshall, 1033 Circle Dr, Town of Lincoln, spoke on concerns with zoning district change, questioned whether the plan is compatible with surrounding land use, and believes land use planning is not properly being done. Opposed to selling the capital asset for a short-term budget concern.

Mayor Brown commented that the City does not own Riverside property and is not selling the property.

Lynne Petruzates, 4058 Sucker Springs Ln, Town of Washington. Opposed to rezoning, wants to protect public green space from development.

Bill Strasser, 1756 Meta Lake Rd, Town of Three Lakes. Concerns about cost of infrastructure and questioning if city taxpayers would be stuck with that expense.

Carol Marshall, 1033 Circle Dr, Town of Lincoln. Opposed to residential development of Riverside property. Urges that a Comprehensive Impact Study, Environmental study in particular, be done before rezone is done. There is value in green space, and our green space is limited. Potential further endangering of land, water and environment quality. Would like to see improvements made to green space.

Dale Ayers, 1600 Ayers Ln, Town of Washington, Vilas County Fair Board. Mayor Brown disclosed family relation to Ayers. Presented a petition that was started a couple of years ago, containing 577 signatures. The petition heading was "Let's not divide, let's keep the Fairgrounds wide", "We the undersigned support the stoppage of the partitioning off of the fairgrounds land. This property is zoned park and recreation. Let's keep it that way". The petition was given to the Clerk for the record. The petition does not include physical address, but Ayers reported signers were from Eagle River Proper.

Laura VanValkenberg, 3740 Aldridge Lake Road, Town of Sugar Camp, President of Great Headwaters Trails Foundation, collaborating with River Trail Commission to develop pedestrian/bike trail to connect Eagle River to St. Germain. Advocated for the inclusion of a pedestrian/bike trail in any development plans at Riverside. The trail meant to connect Eagle River and St. Germain, benefits the City of Eagle River residents and visitors by providing a safe route through that area.

Joe Panci, 1176 Fire Tree Trail, Town of Lincoln. Echoes sentiments already captured. Opposed to change in the zoning designation. Wants to see Riverside used as an end point to the bike trail. Asks the Commission to listen to the constituents. Cited the value of public land.

Patricia Gibbs, 1267 Shields Rd, St. Germain. Wants to know who started this and what is the reason?

Mayor Brown stated this is Vilas County project, not a City of Eagle River project.

Annette Numrich, 1533 E Dollar Lake Rd, Town of Lincoln. Opposes the rezoning, uses park, and wants to see affordable housing for people who work here not luxury housing coming into the area.

Nancy Moriarity, 3772 Island View Ln, Town of Washington. Opposes the rezoning, lives near the Lake Forest redevelopment and doesn't want to see similar damage to the landscape to happen in the City of Eagle River. If sold, put restrictions in place on property.

Michael Gough, 5852 Hwy 70 W, Town of Cloverland, GERTA tennis courts representative. Confirmed that the existing tennis courts are not included in this proposed rezone and development. Will there be anything in place for boat parking to prevent parking at tennis courts?

Walter Tyshynsky, 1658 Rangeline Rd, Town of Washington. Would like to see parks maintained for the people as a park, as is done in Milwaukee.

Melissa Deal, 121 N Main St, City of Eagle River. Walks park area daily in the summer with dog. Does not want to see it go. Expressed concerns of tree being taken down on Main St, DPW Foreman confirmed it was taken down for safety due to large split in tree trunk.

Mayor Brown called for any additional comments three times. The Public Comments portion of the hearing was closed.

The floor was then turned to the petitioner representative, Jerry Burkett, speaking as Vilas County Chair. Burkett declared he could not respond to the comments in three minutes and would try to make it fast. Mayor Brown permitted Burkett, as petitioner, to have the floor to respond without the three-minute limit.

Burkett spoke on revenue limits set by the State of Wisconsin and on the expenses to run Vilas County and continue services. Burkett stressed the tax revenue from current tax rolls for Vilas County cannot sustain the expenses long term. Burkett stated there are two ways for the City of Eagle River to increase their tax base, annexation or building. Burkett is working to make our community a better place. Selling this parcel will not affect the Vilas County Fair. We need to generate tax revenue. Burkett was pleased with the number of people who attended the hearing and spoke, urging residents of neighboring towns to request land in their towns be made into parks. Parks must be maintained. Vilas County is the #3 least taxed county in the state and Burkett reported that 50% of City of Eagle River is tax exempt. Vilas County is running into a fiscal crisis, due to the inability to tax. Without development, most of us would not have a place to live. The parcels would be sold on an auction site, and Burkett would not be gaining any commission. Burkett provided examples of where his actions benefited the area and that he acts in the best interest of our community. Burkett urged the crowd to express their concerns to their State of WI elected officials. The Riverside Park parcel is underutilized and there is an opportunity to develop to gain money for Vilas County roads and City of Eagle River tax base. Burkett encouraged all in attendance to be at the Vilas County Board meeting when the sale is voted on. Phil Kriesel of MSA confirmed there is less than 100' of water main extension (loop), that would be done at city expense, that would not be part of the subdivision expense. Loop would be done for water quality and is not required for the subdivision. Vilas County would pay for city sewer/water to get to proposed development.

The public hearing was closed by Mayor Brown at 6:05pm.

The discussion moved to the Planning Commission members.

Kim Schaffer: Regarding environmental study requests, with the proposed lots being on city sewer and water, it's the soundest way environmentally to add homes to the city. With the density concern, the residential homes on lots close to 100' wide continue the line of homes from Bridges Landing on lot sizes larger than required. Schaffer believes plan is feasible as the space would fit 18 lots, the proposed preliminary plat is for 10 lots, with outlots on each end of the development for public use. The tax roll increase associated with the sale of proposed lots on underutilized property will bring in tax dollars for all jurisdictions.

John Hletko: Thanked everyone for coming and/or speaking. Asked for estimated net proceeds to Vilas County with Burkett replying after expenses, \$1.5 million, on the cautious side.

Adam Grassl: For the Planning Commission portion of the rezone and plat. Feels the proposed plan is consistent and not out of place in the area, the lots meet standards, city sewer and water advantageous to environmental impact, auction sale means anyone can purchase the lots. Grassl stated fairgrounds to the south of the road should not be sold but stated the sale of parcels on the north side of the road, known as Riverside Park, would not be dangerous or ill-conceived to develop. Access on each end (outlots) is advantageous.

Alex Forer: Thanked everyone for their passion and feedback. We all want to see our community succeed and supports green space and public lands. Concerns on what will happen in 10 years if we don't find new ways to gain revenue. Would be an easy and safe development.

Brad Adamovich: Thanked all for coming and echoes the opinions already stated by the other Planning Commissioner members. Adamovich asked who would own the outlots on each end with Burkett stating the outlots would not be sold and would continue to be owned/maintained by Vilas County.

Mayor Brown: The City of Eagle River struggles with levy limits and expenses associated with services and running of the City. Mayor Brown put the cost of roads into perspective. Asked if Commission wanted to have an impact study done, roads and especially with storm water, parking for events, and bathroom plans. Phil Kriesel responded that the 65% residential impervious surface requirement is our storm water protection. Burkett responded parking and bathrooms would be up for discussion with the City. Mayor suggested bringing an additional set of professional eyes on the proposed plan.

Burkett and Mayor Brown urge all residents to write governor to relax the levy limits.

i) Changes to/Cancellation of Resolution 735: No action.

ii) Amend the zoning district classification from Park/Recreation (PR) to Single Two-Family Residential (R-2): *Motion by Grassl, 2nd by Forer to recommend the City Council amend the zoning district classification for the lots north of West Division, south of Eagle river, area known as Riverside Park, northern part of the fairgrounds from Park/Recreation(PR) to Single Two-Family Residential (R-2). Carried on a roll call vote. Ayes: Grassl, Forer, Adamovich, Schaffer Nays: Hletko*

iii) Approval of preliminary plat: Ginner confirmed she had no concerns on the presented plan from the City of Eagle River Zoning perspective. Kriesel explained the process the plat will have to go through, including approval by the State of Wisconsin. *Motion by Grassl, 2nd by Forer to recommend City Council approval of the preliminary plat as presented. Carried on a roll call vote. Ayes: Grassl, Forer, Adamovich, Schaffer Nays: Hletko*

b) *Motion by Schaffer, 2nd by Hletko to re-appoint Mary Horant for a three-year term, ending 2028. Carried, all.*

c) Lions Club request for approval to build municipal bathrooms at Gremban Park in 2026: Hletko announced he is an active member of the Lions club and would be abstaining from discussion. Mike Sanborn presented preliminary plan for the Eagle River Lions Club installation of bathrooms. The Lions Club is looking at building two unisex bathrooms at Gremban Park behind City Hall. The placement would be towards 3rd Street to be cost effective in hooking into the existing sewer. Sanborn reported that the presented building plans would closely mimic the restrooms at Riverview Park. Burkett asked about the open hours of bathroom and maintenance costs for the City of Eagle River. Grassl and Mayor Brown suggested a notice be sent to all neighbors within 300'. *Motion by Schaffer, 2nd by Adamovich to recommend the City Council approves Lions Club request to build municipal bathrooms at Gremban Park in 2026. Carried on a roll call vote, all. Hletko abstaining.*

Motion by Schaffer, 2nd by Hletko to adjourn at 6:40PM.

