

**Beltrami County Board of Adjustments/Planning Commission
Minutes for Monday, March 23, 2026
County Administration Building – County Board Room
701 Minnesota Avenue NW
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601**

General Business

Members present: Ed Fussy
 Bruce Poppel
 Don Hazeman
 Craig Gaasvig
 Doug Underthun
 Bill Best
 Paul Nordby

Members absent:

Others Present: Brent Rud, Director, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department
 Greg Larson, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department
 Alec Wilcox, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department
 Rose Moore, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department
 Bev Schrupp, Tenstrike
 T.J Melcher, 2151 Tyler Ave SE/5596 Bittersweet Drive
 Eric Nelson, 23395 County 9, Bemidji
 Todd Goger, 2448 Last RD NW, Bemidji
 Matt Murray, 304 Third St. NW
 Michael Weiher, 1565 Bucktail DR SW
 Kirsten Weiher, 1565 Bucktail DR SW
 K. Andrew Erholts, 9862 S Gull Lake RD, Tenstrike
 Stew Schaults, Port Hope Township
 Mike Plotts, Port Hope Township
 BreAnn Plotts, Port Hope Township

Chairman called the Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment Meeting to order at 6:00 PM. **Board and staff introduced themselves to members of the audience. Brent reviewed the meeting procedures and process, as well as the agenda, for those in attendance.** The meeting minutes for October 27, 2025, were brought forward for approval. **Bruce Poppel moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 27, 2025. Motion seconded by Bill Best.**

Motion carried and approved.

Board of Adjustment

New Business

Variance Request of:

Dustin Holloway
4905 Evergreen Ln NE
Bemidji, MN 56601

Township:

Turtle Lake

Body of Water:

Beltrami Lake (4-135) RD

The Purpose of:

Applicant is requesting a variance to construct a 1,190 sq ft addition on the non-lakeside of an existing residential structure located approximately 35.5' from the ordinary high-water mark of Lake Beltrami. Lake Beltrami is classified as a recreational development (RD) lake under the Beltrami County Shoreland Ordinance No. 6, which requires a minimum structure setback of 100' from the OHWL.

Legal Description:

Tax Parcel 47.00667.00

That part of Government Lot Four (4), Section Thirty-six (36), Township One Hundred Forty-eight (148), Range Thirty-three (33), described as follows: A complete legal description is on file in the Beltrami County Environmental Services Department.

Alec Wilcox gave the staff report, discussing lot information and details of the application. GIS maps showing the location of the 1.57-acre parcel on Lake Beltrami were viewed. The 2021 approved variance was to construct two additions onto a residential structure within the 100ft setback. The first approved addition was a 207 sq. ft. covered porch that was completed. The second approved structure was 1,190 sq. ft. two-story structure, a garage & living space (bedroom & bathroom) & shed dormer to be added across width of existing roof facing the lake. The second approved structure was not completed, only the dirt work was completed for the garage. The 2021 variance expired October 26th, 2022. Photos of the existing structures which were approved to be built in 2005 and 2021 were viewed. The property site plans were viewed with pictures of the current structures overlaid with the proposed building plans of the two-story structure, as well as the view from the boat landing. The applicant gave no comments.

The Chairman opened the floor for public comment. Comments received from the public were read aloud by Alec Wilcox.

- **Beltrami County Highway Department** – No concerns or comments regarding this variance.
- **Charlotte Schullo** – Mailed in a letter and wrote she is concerned the construction/wetland fill for the addition will affect the creek, wetland, and Lake Beltrami.

Finding no further public comment, the Chairman closed the floor for public comment on the Dustin Holloway variance request.

Findings of Fact

1. Is the variance in harmony with the intent of the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and State Shoreline Management Ordinance rules?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? The lot and property were established prior to any ordinances.

2. Without the variance is the owner deprived of a reasonable use of the property?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? It is reasonable to want an attached garage. A similar variance request was approved by the Board in 2021.

3. Is the alleged hardship due to circumstances unique to this property?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? There is only one area to put garage without building in the wetland or closer to the lake.

4. Were the circumstances causing the hardship created by someone or something other than the landowner or previous landowners?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? The plat predates the shoreland ordinance and existing structure is on the property.

5. Will the issuance of the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?
Yes(x) No ()
Why? There will not be a change in the essential character of the locality.

6. Does the alleged hardship involve more than economic consideration?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? The economics were not discussed, and the lot itself is the difficulty.

If all answers are "yes" the criteria for granting the variance request have been met.

Motion by Doug Underthun to approve the variance request of Dustin Holloway. Motion seconded by Don Hazeman.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Chairman then closed the Board of Adjustment Public Hearing on the proposed Variance request of Dustin Holloway.

Variance Request of:

Terry Melcher
5596 Bittersweet Rd NE
Bemidji, MN 56601

Township:

Port Hope

Body of Water:

Three Island Lake (4-134) SP

The Purpose of:

Applicant is requesting a variance from the Beltrami County Shoreland Ordinance to construct a new 2,562 sq ft house inside the structure setback of a bluff on Three Island Lake (SP 4-134). The applicant is also requesting a variance for 3.5' of covered deck to be located inside of the bluff and a patio to be constructed inside the bluff impact zone. The Beltrami County Shoreland Management Ordinance has a 30' structure setback from the top of bluff.

Legal Description:

Tax Parcel 34.00183.00

That part of Government Lot Four (4), Section Eighteen (18), Township One Hundred Forty-eight (148) North, Range Thirty-two (32) West of the Fifth Principal Meridian, described as follows: A complete legal description is on file in the Beltrami County Environmental Services Department.

Greg Larson gave the staff report. The GIS maps of the 17.7-acre property with approximately 7 acres are upland on Three Island Lake, were viewed. The property background, topography map and variance request was viewed. Greg explained how to determine if something is a bluff and where the top of bluff lies. The site plans for the proposed 2,562 sq ft house and covered deck inside the structure setback of a bluff were viewed. Pictures of the site from the bottom of the hill, top of the bluff, and view to the lake were shown. The Board discussed old structures on the property, which were a mobile home and a shed which are no longer there. The discussion continued about the abandoned/crushed septic system, well record and soil profile of the upland portions of the property.

The applicant, Terry Melcher (T.J), and surveyor, Matt Murray, approached the podium. T.J described the property's topography and challenges in selecting a building site, noting the current plan balances topography and access. Moving the house farther from the bluff would create slope issues affecting the driveway, landing area, and ADA accessibility for a wheelchair-bound family member. He outlined stormwater mitigation measures to protect the bluff and lake. Of the 17-acre parcel, about 7 acres are buildable. For alternative building sites, relocating the proposed structure farther inland would increase site impact and reduce lakeside value, with additional challenges at each alternative site. The proposed home would replace the previous mobile home at the same location, continuing residential use. T.J also reviewed site plans and images, highlighting construction location, slope constraints, and stormwater management plans.

The Board requested clarification on the proposed structure plans, protective measures, and retaining wall/stormwater management for extreme water events. Matt Murray discussed the rain gutter system, which will direct runoff away from the bluff and lakeshore into a dry well, and

reviewed the retaining wall and stormwater plan. The Board also discussed the bluff definition, reviewed site photos, and addressed the vegetation management plan. The Board asked why the two alternative sites were not selected. T.J explained one site has steep slopes requiring significant excavation, an impractical driveway, its proximity to the property line and its distance from lake. Matt Murray added the second site is also steeply sloped in all directions and too small to support the proposed house. The Board discussed lake access; T.J stated the dock would remain in its historical location, with plans for a safer future walkway.

The Board opened the floor for public comment. All comments received through email and mail were read aloud by Greg Larson, Brent Rud, and Alec Wilcox

- **Amy Funk, Ann Gorman, Chris Weir-Koetter, Greg Ward, Lori Paris, Lori Yourd, Mary Anderson, Maryhelen Chadwick, Patricia Quistgaard, Polly Scotland, Richard Anderson, and Vange Anderson** - Emailed and asked to deny the proposed variance on Three Island Lake, noting there is plenty of space to build on the 17-acre parcel without impacting the bluff impact zone.
- **Angie Clark, Carolyn Jacobs, Kay Murphy, and Lina Lemmer** – emailed in with concern that the variance is unnecessary and the setbacks should be followed to protect the lakeshore, especially with so much space which will not impact the Three Island Lake bluff zone.
- **Anna Plumb** – emailed to provide formal comment on the variance request, to respectfully recommend denying this variance due to the significant environmental risks and intent of the Shoreland Ordinance. Specifically concerns with:
 - Soil instability and erosion caused by various construction activities, sedimentation to adjacent waterbodies caused by bluff disturbance leading to various water quality issues, loss of vegetative buffers due to disturbance leading to negative impacts on shoreline stability and increased runoff and hydrologic alteration due to impervious services such as roofs and decks.
- **Greg Roberts** – emailed in and stated that Three Island Park is a beautiful place to ski, walk, and bring guests to show off how beautiful the area is. Roberts is concerned with the variance request submitted - would negatively impact the natural view from the park and asked to deny the variance request because there is plenty of space to build on the property.
- **Howard Hoody & Paul Conklin** – asked the commissioners to deny the proposed variance because the property owners should have known the rules and regulations when the property was purchased.
- **Jane Killgore** – emailed in with concern and suggested to deny the variance for the proposed house. It would be within view of Three Island County Park, and it would affect the park’s serenity and natural setting.
- **Judy Lunseth, Mary Chernugal, and Monica Hansmeyer** – emailed in with opposition to the variance request, noting the regulations for bluff buffer zone and special protection classifications are in place to protect fragile waterways, lakes, and rivers for the good of the public.
- **Linda Long & June Bergquist** – emailed in with concern for protecting the lakes and waterways noting the lake ordinances are established to protect the lake and this request

on Three Island Lake should be denied. In addition, claiming hardship for better views is exaggerated and negates the protective process.

- **Sue Brokl** - emailed to provide formal comment on the variance request as an adjacent landowner and the Turtle River Watershed Association (TRWA) board representative for Three Island Lake. Brokl noted in 2023 she identified two locations for residence that would comply with the setback rules of the shoreland ordinance. In addition, Brokl cited special concerns that were identified from the 2011 Lake Managements Plan for Three Island Lake for the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership Committee

Finding no further public comment, the chairman closed the floor for public comment on the Terry Melcher variance request.

T.J stated that submitted comments were missing context, noting he understood their perspective and would likely have made similar comments without the additional information. He explained that Matt Murray was hired to complete a full site survey, allowing for an informed site selection based on the property's natural contours. Murray and the builder developed a site plan and stormwater mitigation plan to work with the land and shoreland ordinance. The Board discussed the proposed house size, alternative building locations, details of the construction plan, and considered whether a site visit would be helpful before making a final decision.

Motion by Doug Underthun to recess the Board of Adjustments meeting until Tuesday March 31st, at 3pm to visit the Melcher property and continue discussion of the Melcher variance. Motion seconded by Don Hazeman.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Planning Commission

New Business

Proposed Plat Request of:

South Gull Lake Bay -
Lost Keys Bemidji LLC and Eric Nelson
TBD S Gull Lake Rd NE
Tenstrike, MN 56683

Township:
Body of Water:

Port Hope
Gull Lake (4-120) RD

The Purpose of:

Applicant is seeking approval for a proposed plat located on S Gull Lake Rd NE, to subdivide approximately 34.13 acres into 6 residential lots on Gull Lake (RD 4-120) in Port Hope Township. The proposed lots meet the requirements of the Beltrami County Subdivision Controls Ordinance #5.

Legal Description:

Tax Parcel: 34.00031.00

All the real property, together with improvements, if any, situated, lying and being in the County of Beltrami, and State of Minnesota, described as follows: Government Lot Seven (7), Section Four (4), Township One Hundred Forty-eight (148), Range Thirty-two (32).

Greg Larson gave the staff report on the preliminary plat. The 34.13 acres are located on Gull Lake and purchased by Lost Keys Bemidji LLC in 2025. GIS maps, site plans of the six proposed sites and pictures of the lot were viewed. The staff recommendation was to approve the preliminary plat as proposed on South Gull Lake. The Board discussed the proposed road access from S Gull Lake Rd. NE, public lake access for future residents and building requirements and restrictions to access the lake for future residents.

The applicant Eric Nelson and the surveyor Matt Murray came to the podium. Eric noted the goal for the proposed houses is affordability, not large lakeshore properties. The exact building plans for the houses and the roads are in progress, and any suggestions would be welcome. Matt Murray noted the proposed site plans exclude the wetlands and overhead powerlines, and the access road to the lots is a township road.

The Board opened the floor for public comment. All comments received through email and mail were read aloud by Greg Larson and Brent Rud.

- **Beltrami County Highway Department** – No concerns or comments regarding this proposed plat request.
- **Beltrami Land Records Department** – The boundary of the preliminary plat has been checked and found to meet the mathematical closure tolerance as in the Beltrami County Subdivision Controls Ordinance.
- **Michelle Williams** – emailed in and stated she is opposed to any application, development, or subdivision of her properties with the tax parcels of 34.00071.01 and 34.00071.00.
- **Curt and Bev Schrupp** – Emailed in and asked to consider the safety issues of having six new driveways in a short amount of space with two curves and a hill
- **Bev Schrupp** – approached to podium and noted she is worried about the possible environmental impact of the board walks related to the plat. With 4 separate board walks, this could cause disturbance of the vegetation, wildlife, and migratory birds within the wetland.
- **Steve Schaubhut** – Approached the podium as the Port Hope Township Roads Supervisor and had concerns about the sharp curve and culverts backing up on S Gull Lake Road, as well as potential impacts from new driveways on culvert maintenance, road safety, and water flow that could lead to flooding. The Board suggested coordinating with developer Eric Nelson to address costs and culvert maintenance and discussed the possibility of a frontage road.

The applicant and surveyor responded to township road concerns, stating the addition of six homes should not warrant a full rebuild of the road, as the road serves more properties than the proposed plat. They suggested shared driveways and larger culverts to address access and water flow issues. The Board, applicant, surveyor, and Roads Supervisor discussed culverts, drainage, and shared access options.

Motion by Don Hazeman for preliminary approval for proposed plat of Lost Keys Bemidji LLC and Eric Nelson. Motion seconded by Bruce Poppel.

Motion carried and approved.

Recess until Tuesday March 31st, 2026, at 3pm.

Beltrami County Planning Commission/Board of Adjustments resumed from recess on the Terry Melcher Variance from the previous meeting on March 23, 2026. Board visited 5596 Bittersweet Rd NE Bemidji, MN 5660, with the meeting officially readjourning at 3:30pm.

The Board visited the site where the old shed was located and discussed the evaluation of bluff conditions, then toured a secondary potential building site. The applicant and surveyor noted challenges with elevation, driveway grade, and proximity to the property line. The Board discussed drainage between hills, earthwork, lake access, and an email circulated in opposition; Matt Murray noted this email inaccurately depicted the proposed building location.

At the proposed building site, spray-painted lines marked the proposed structure and bluff. The Board discussed bluff boundaries, required earthwork, vegetation disturbance, lake protection during construction, and viewsheds to the east and south. The site visit concluded, and discussion resumed at the Beltrami County Boardroom.

The Board discussed that all three sites are buildable and that lack of a lake view is not a reason alone to approve a variance. They also discussed driveway access during severe weather. The Board discussed the pros and cons of building on the proposed site.

Findings of Fact

1. Is the variance in harmony with the intent of the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and State Shoreline Management Ordinance rules?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? The ordinance is there to protect the shoreland and water quality; this application is doing that.
2. Without the variance is the owner deprived of a reasonable use of the property?
Yes (x) No ()
Why? Of the three sites on the lot, the proposed site is the most suitable to build on.
3. Is the alleged hardship due to circumstances unique to this property?

Yes (x) No ()

Why? Topography limited options to build.

- 4. Were the circumstances causing the hardship created by someone or something other than the landowner or previous landowners?

Yes (x) No ()

Why? Topography limited options to build.

- 5. Will the issuance of the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Yes(x) No ()

Why? The building will barely be visible from the lake and there are other homes more visible from the lake.

- 6. Does the alleged hardship involve more than economic consideration?

Yes (x) No ()

Why? Money was not discussed. Decision is based on the topography of the land. Limited options to build, and the proposed site was the most suitable option.

If all answers are "yes" the criteria for granting the variance request have been met.

Motion by Bruce Poppel to approve the Terry Melcher variance with the following conditions : 1.) Storm Water Management Plan and 2.) Vegetation Management Plan must be submitted and approved by Environmental Services prior to any work starting. Motion seconded by Bill Best.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Chairman then closed the Board of Adjustment Public Hearing on the proposed Variance request of Terry Melcher.

Motion by Doug Underthun to adjourn the Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment Public Hearing for March 31, 2026. Motion was seconded by Don Hazeman. Motion carried and approved. Chair called the meeting for March 31, officially adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Brent Rud
Beltrami County ESD Director



Chairman
Beltrami County Planning Commission