Beltrami County Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment Meeting
Minutes for Monday, August 24, 2026
County Administration Building – County Board Room
701 Minnesota Ave NW
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601

General Business

Members present:	Don Hazeman Bill Best Paul Nordby Doug Underthun Craig Gaasvig
Members absent:	Bruce Poppel Ed Fussy
Others Present:	Brent Rud, Director, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department Greg Larson, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department Alec Wilcox, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department Shannon Schmidt, Beltrami County Environmental Services Department Mike Pease, 940 Chippewa Ave, Mendota Heights, MN 55118 Michael Andersen, 14025 Jay Ct NE, Bemidji, MN 56601 Rob Gaude, 16901 Irvine Ave NW, Bemidji, MN 56601 Jen Gaude, 16901 Irvine Ave NW, Bemidji, MN 56601 Laurina Trask, 20647 Teddy Rd NW, Shevlin, MN 56676 Ruth Trask, 14194 Grange Rd NW, Shevlin, MN 56676 Brad Trask, 20939 Old Jefferson Dr NW, Solway, MN 56678 Matt Murray, 304 3rd St NW, Bemidji, MN 56601

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 June 22, 2026, were brought forward for approval. **Paul Nordby moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 22, 2026. Motion seconded by Bill Best.**

Motion carried and approved.

Board of Adjustment

New Business

Variance Request of:	**Rob Gaude** 16901 Irvine Ave NW Bemidji, MN 56601
Township:	Turtle Lake
Body of Water:	Little Turtle Lake (4-155) SP

The Purpose of:
Applicant is requesting a variance from the Beltrami County Shoreland Management Ordinance to convert an existing 280 square-foot covered porch on the lakeside of the home into living space and to construct a 168 square-foot covered entryway and a 1,068 square-foot attached garage on the non-lakeshore side of the home. The existing home is approximately 142' from Little Turtle Lake and 3' from the top of bluff. Little Turtle Lake (4-155) is classified as a Special Protection lake requiring a 150' structure setback, and the top of the bluff requires a 30' structure setback.

Legal Description:
Tax Parcel: 47.00231.00
Government Lot Three (3), Section Seventeen (17), Township One Hundred Forty-eight (148) North, Range Thirty-three (33) West, Beltrami County, Minnesota.

Alec Wilcox gave the staff report. The existing house, which was built in 1988, sits 142' from the Ordinary High-Water Level of Little Turtle Lake and 3' from the Top of Bluff. Half of the house is outside the bluff setback. The lot is approximately 13 acres in size, and the Gaude family purchased the home in July of 2026. There is a current 2026 septic compliance inspection on file. Permit history on the parcel shows a 1988 building permit for the existing residential structure and a 1992 building permit for the 30' X 60' pole barn. Owner intends to remove part of the pole barn during construction. GIS maps showing the parcel location on a three-sided point in Little Turtle Lake were viewed. Topography of the parcel was also discussed. The current footprint of the existing structure, excluding the covered patio, covers 2,061 square feet. The proposed changes will add 1,516 square feet of living space and garage space. Photos of all sides of the existing structure, as well as the pole barn, were viewed. It was noted that a very large pine tree is currently growing through the roof of the covered patio. Staff recommendation is to approve the variance request as proposed: 1) 20' X 14', 280 square foot conversion of covered patio into living space; 2) 14' X 12', 168 square foot covered entryway to be added to non-lakeshore side of house; 3) 30' X 35.6', 1,068 square foot attached garage to be added to non-lakeshore side of house. Conditions included in this approval are as follows: 1) A Storm Water Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application. 2) A Vegetation Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application.

Rob Gaude, applicant, approached the podium. Rob stated that Alec's report was very thorough. The Board asked the applicant about the tree that is growing through the roof of the covered patio. Rob indicated that part of the tree has already broken off and the tree is actually a safety hazard. The tree will need to be removed when construction starts. The Board also asked what would be done with the existing garage. Existing attached garage will be turned into living space. The Board asked if there would be any change to the height of the residence. No change in height will take place.

The Board opened the floor for public comment. Emailed comments received were read aloud by Alec Wilcox.

- **Beltrami County Highway Department email:** the Highway Department has no concerns or comments regarding this request.

Finding no further public comment, the Chairman closed the floor for public comment on the Rob Gaude 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? State rules allow variance requests for property owners with existing residences that cannot meet ordinance requirements.

2. Without the variance is the owner deprived of a reasonable use of the property?

   Yes (x) No ( )

   Why? The tree growing through the roof of the covered patio is posing a safety hazard to the rest of the house. Part of the tree has already busted off.

3. Is the alleged hardship due to circumstances unique to this property?

   Yes (x) No ( )

   Why? The topography and the tree growing through the house are causing issues.

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

   Yes (x) No ( )

   Why? The topography of the lot and the bluff allow only a small area of high ground for structures.

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

   Yes(x) No ( )

   Why? The hazardous tree is being removed and all upgrades and additions to the home will be on the non-lakeshore side of the home.

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

Yes (x) No ( )

Why? Economics was not a consideration. The tree growing through the roof could cause damage to the entire home.

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

Motion by Bill Best to approve the variance request of Rob Gaude as proposed with the following conditions: 1.) A Storm Water Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application; and 2.) A Vegetation Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application. Doug Underthun seconded the motion.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Chairman then closed the Board of Adjustment Public Hearing on the proposed Variance request of Rob Gaude.

Variance Request of:	**Andersen Living Trust 01Oct03** **Michael D Andersen, Trustee** 14025 Jay Ct NE Bemidji, MN 56601
Township:	Turtle River
Body of Water:	Long Lake (4-076) RD

The Purpose of:
Applicant is requesting a variance from the Beltrami County Shoreland Management Ordinance to replace an existing dwelling with a new 1,856 square-foot residence located within the bluff and Ordinary High-Water Level (OHWL) structure setbacks on Long Lake (RD 4-076). The existing residence is 1,648 square feet and is currently located 59' from the OHWL. The proposed residence would be situated 71' from the OHWL. The Beltrami County Shoreland Management Ordinance requires a 30' structure setback from the top of bluff and a 100' structure setback to Long Lake.

Legal Description:
Tax Parcel: 48.00732.00
Lot Eleven (011), Block Two (2), Nod-Away Subdivision, Beltrami County, Minnesota.

Greg Larson gave the staff report. Property owner owns two adjacent parcels, 48.00732.00 (0.45 acres) and 48.00733.00 (0.36 acres). GIS maps showing the parcel location on Long Lake were viewed. Long Lake is a private lake with no public access. A variance was granted in 1993 to build the existing structure and did not include mention of a bluff. Both, the existing and proposed, dwellings are inside the top of bluff setback. Survey maps of the property with existing structures were reviewed, as was a survey map of the property with proposed structures. The yellow areas on these survey maps identifies the bluff. Topography of the parcel was

discussed. Structure is on a hilltop with drop-offs on all sides and is well vegetated. Photos of the existing modular home as it was being disassembled for removal were viewed. Photos of the proposed building location were viewed. Photos of the steep hills down to the lake and down the driveway were viewed. Staff recommendation is to approve the variance request as proposed with the following condition(s): 1) A Storm Water Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application.

Michael Andersen, applicant, and Matt Murray, surveyor, approached the podium. Michael stated that he would like to make the property more "lake like" and get rid of the modular home. Matt affirmed that by making these proposed changes, the home would be moving 12' further back from the lake. Matt also explained that the impervious surface figures were calculated on his proposed survey map using the area of both parcels but would still be under 25% for even just the one parcel.

The Board opened the floor for public comment. Emailed comments received were read aloud by Greg Larson.

- **Beltrami County Highway Department email:** the Highway Department has no concerns or comments regarding this request.
- **Karin Snortland and Donna Zelinsky letter:** neighboring residents from 13755 Hawkeye Pt NE submitted a letter of support for the Andersen variance request. Their letter laid out the key environmental and community reasons for their support as follows:
    - Enhanced Shoreline Protection: Moving the residence 12' further back from the lake increases the natural vegetative buffer.
    - Environmentally Conscientious Design: The project intentionally reduces the home's visual and physical footprint near the water's edge, helping prevent unwanted surface runoff.
    - Practical Hardship Relief: Strict enforcement of setbacks would penalize the property owner for choosing an environmentally beneficial path. Approval of this variance will not impact public safety nor the quiet character of Turtle River Township.

Finding no further public comment, the Chairman closed the floor for public comment on the Andersen Living Trust 01OCT03 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? Property owner is proposing that the residence be moved 12' further back from the lake.

2. Without the variance is the owner deprived of a reasonable use of the property?

   Yes (x) No ( )

   Why? Owner is making necessary improvements.

3. Is the alleged hardship due to circumstances unique to this property?
Yes (x) No ( )

Why? The topography and the steep slopes on all sides of the residence are causing hardship.

4. Were the circumstances causing the hardship created by someone or something other than the landowner or previous landowners?
Yes (x) No ( )

Why? The topography of the lot and the bluff allow only a small area of high ground for structures.

5. Will the issuance of the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?
Yes(x) No ( )

Why? The essential character of the locality will not change, and home improvements will have a positive effect on the environment.

6. Does the alleged hardship involve more than economic consideration?
Yes (x) No ( )

Why? Economics was not a consideration.

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 Andersen Living Trust 01OCT03 – Michael Andersen, Trustee, as proposed with the following conditions: 1.) A Storm Water Management Plan must be submitted with the building permit application. Paul Nordby seconded the motion.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Chairman then closed the Board of Adjustment Public Hearing on the proposed Variance request of Andersen Living Trust 01OCT03 – Michael Andersen, Trustee.

Planning Commission

New Business

Conditional Use Request of: **KGI Wireless on behalf of Verizon Wireless**
TBD Beaver Lodge Ln NW
Pinewood, MN 56676

Township: Buzzle
Body of Water: N/A

The Purpose of:
Applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to construct a 294' self-supported telecommunications tower on a 100' x 100' section of land leased from Trask Family LLC. The Beltrami County Tower and Wind Energy Conversion System Ordinance requires a Conditional Use Permit for telecommunication towers.

Legal Description:
Tax Parcel: 09.00449.00
Section Thirty-six (36), Township One Hundred Forty-eight (148), Range Thirty-five (35), Northeast Quarter of Northeast Quarter (NE ¼ of NE ¼) and Government Lot One (1), Beltrami County, Minnesota.

Alec Wilcox gave the staff report for the proposed KGI Wireless Conditional Use Permit request. KGI Wireless is requesting to construct a cell phone tower on behalf of Verizon Wireless in a non-shoreland area. GIS maps of the parcel location were viewed. Site plans, drawings, and proposed images provided by Herzog Engineering were also viewed. Photos of the property and the gravel roads around it were viewed. The tower will be 285' tall with a 9' lightning rod on top. An area measuring 100' X 100' will be leased from the Trask Family LLC. A tower compound measuring 44' X 54' will be fenced in. There will be two concrete pads poured – one for equipment cabinets, and one for a future generator. Trees will need to be cleared in a 20' wide access and utility easement from Beaver Lodge Ln NW. A 12' wide gravel drive will be constructed for access. The tower site will be excavated/scraped to a depth of 3" minimum to remove vegetative cover.

The property where the tower is to be constructed is owned by Trask Family LLC. The parcel is approximately 80 acres, with half of the property in a shoreland zone. The parcel is a mix of wooded areas, wetland, and hay field. There are no structures on the property. The property can be accessed off Beaver Lodge Rd NW.

A Conditional Use Permit for telecommunication towers is required in Beltrami County. Beltrami County Ordinance # 35 requires a property line setback equal to the height of the tower plus 10'. KGI is proposing a 305' setback from the nearest property line. Ordinance requires a 1,000' setback from lakeshore. Proposed tower will be 2,000' from Funkley Lake (4-299). Ordinance requires a self-supporting tower to be contained within a 6' tall security fenced area.

Alec recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit as proposed with the requirement that all parts of Beltrami County Tower and Wind Energy Conversion System Ordinance # 35 be followed.

Mike Pease, representative of KGI Wireless, approached the Board. Mike was asked if the blinking lights on the tower would disturb any nearby residences. Mike explained that the two red lights at the top of the tower only reach 150' and are medium intensity and flashing. The

FAA sets the requirements and restrictions for lighting on towers. The Board asked how far away cell phone coverage will be improved. Mike explained that the coverage area is line-of-site and no further. The Board asked if other carriers will be using this tower. Mike said the tower can handle three carriers, and Verizon would be on the top. The Board asked how the height of the tower is determined. The height of the tower is determined by the topography in the area. An RF (radiofrequency) study was completed, taking into account lakes, wetlands, and low spots.

Having reviewed the requirements of Ordinance # 35 and the "Factors Considered in Granting Conditional Use Permits for Towers" sheet, the Chairman opened the Planning Commission Public Hearing for public comments on the KGI Wireless on behalf of Verizon Wireless Conditional Use Permit request.

Finding no public comment, the Chairman closed the Planning Commission Public Hearing on the Conditional Use Permit request of KGI Wireless on behalf of Verizon Wireless.

Motion by Doug Underthun to approve the Conditional Use Permit request of KGI Wireless on behalf of Verizon Wireless as proposed. Motion seconded by Paul Nordby.

Motion unanimously carried and approved.

Chairman then closed the Planning Commission Public Hearing on the Conditional Use Permit request of KGI Wireless on behalf of Verizon Wireless.

Old Business – None

Motion by Bill Best to adjourn the Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment Public Hearing for August 24, 2026. Motion seconded by Paul Nordby. Motion carried and approved. Chair called the meeting for August 24, 2026, officially adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Brent Rud
Beltrami County ESD Director

Chairman
Beltrami County Planning Commission