



Planning Commission
Tuesday, August 4, 2026 - 4:00 PM

Regular Meeting
La Crescent Community Building
336 South First Street

AGENDA

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

1. Items for Consideration

- 1.1 Approval of June 2, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- 1.2 Consideration of property purchase option
- 1.3 Consideration of Comprehensive Plan Update
- 1.4 Zoning Ordinance discussion

2. Future Agenda Items- Commission Members

3. Adjournment

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION, CITY OF LA CRESCENT,
MINNESOTA
June 2nd, 2026

The Planning Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on June 2nd, 2026, in the City's Community Building located at 336 S. 1st Street.

Item 1. Call to Order

Chair Don Hogan called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. Roll Call

Upon a roll call taken and tallied by Josh Tarrence, Building Inspector, the following members were present: Jon Wilson, Jerry Steffes, Don Hogan, Greg Husmann, and Ryan Niemeier. Mike Welch and Judy Enright were absent. Ex-Officio City Council Representative Chris Langen and City Administrator Cassie Hanan were also present.

Item 4. Approval of the May 5th, 2026 Planning Commission Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the May 5th, 2026 meeting, a motion to accept the minutes, was made by Vice Chair Husmann and seconded by Commissioner Steffes. Upon a roll call vote taken and tallied by Josh Tarrence, Building Inspector, the following members voted in favor thereof, viz;

Greg Husmann	Yes
Jerry Steffes	Yes
Jon Wilson	Yes
Don Hogan	Yes
Ryan Niemeier	Yes

and none voted against the same. The motion was declared duly carried.

Item 5. Public Meeting PC-2026-07 Variance – 604 Hickory Court

Building Inspector Josh Tarrence discussed the staff report in regards to PC-2026-07, a variance request for 604 Hickory Court, by Jeffrey Copp & Jennifer Etrheim. The request is for an additional 45 to 55 feet to the required 25 to 35 feet for the front yard setback as stated in the City of La Crescent Zoning Ordinance for the R-1A Low Density Residential District. The applicants were present and answered questions from the Planning Commission. No other members of the public spoke in regards to the variance request. The public meeting was closed and the Planning Commission members discussed the application. Chair Hogan read through possible Findings for a motion as written in the staff report. Josh

Tarrence read the Conditions of Approval as written in the staff report. A motion was by Vice Chair Husmann, recommending the approval of the variance with the following;

FINDINGS:

1. Is the request in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance?

- B) The variance **is** in harmony with the purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance based on the following findings of the Board of Adjustment because: the intended use will continue as a single-family dwelling.

2. Would granting the variance be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

- B) Granting the variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan because:
- a. there is no specific reference in the comprehensive plan to the minimum or maximum amount of distance for front yard setbacks.
 - b. that the city will maintain and enforce development design guidelines for all housing types that will maintain neighborhood character, property values and aesthetics over time and enhance the social function, health, and safety of City neighborhoods.

Practical Difficulties Analysis

3. Does the property owner propose to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the ordinance?

- B) The property owner does propose to use the property as a residential single-family home which is permitted by the ordinance. This is a uniquely shaped lot, that has significantly less street facing frontage than neighboring lots. The house design is a smaller single-family dwelling and by allowing the setback, the homes would have more uniformity.

4. Is the plight of the landowner due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner?

- B) There are circumstances unique to the property that prevent compliance with the ordinance because: the lot is a pie shaped lot with significantly less street facing frontage compared to neighboring lots.

5. Would granting the variance allow the essential character of the locality to stay the same?

- B) Granting the variance will not alter the essential character of the locality because: the use of the property is still a single-family residential home with a two-car garage. It would also add more uniformity to the cul-de-sac.

Conditions of Approval

- 1) The Applicant will abide by all representations made by the Applicant or their agents made during the permitting process, to the extent those representations were not negated by the planning Commission or City Council and to the extent they are not inconsistent with the spirit of letter explicit conditions of the variance.
- 2) The Applicant complies with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Niemeier. Upon a roll call vote taken and tallied by Josh Tarrence, Building Inspector, the following members voted in favor thereof, viz;

Greg Husmann	Yes
Ryan Niemeier	Yes
Don Hogan	Yes
Jerry Steffes	Yes
Jon Wilson	Yes

and none voted against the same. The motion was declared duly carried.

Building Inspector Josh Tarrence read the following Appeal to the City Council.

Appeal to the City Council

Pursuant to 12.07 Subd. 11 of the La Crescent Zoning Ordinance, upon approval or denial of a variance request by the Board of Adjustment, an applicant or other aggrieved party may file an appeal in writing to the City Council within ten (10) days of the decision, otherwise the decision by the Board of Adjustment becomes final.

Item 6. City Purchase of 421 Walnut Place (Parcel 25.0086.000)

City Administrator Cassie Hanan addressed the Planning Commission in regards to the City purchasing the property located at 421 Walnut Place. Per Minnesota State Statutes, if a city has adopted a comprehensive plan, it may not acquire or dispose of any property until the city's planning commission has reviewed the proposed purchase and reported on whether it will comply with the city's comprehensive plan. Discussion took place between Planning Commission members and City Administrator Hanan in regards to possible proposed uses of the property. A motion was made by Vice Chair Husmann, to approve the purchase of 421 Walnut Place with the included;

PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS: PURCHASE OF 421 WALNUT PLACE

The purchase is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's goals for housing diversity and affordability.

The Plan identifies a significant shortage of housing supply and diversity in the community and encourages the development of more multifamily, rental, senior, and alternative housing types. Acquisition of 421 Walnut Place supports the potential development of multifamily housing aligned with these goals.

The property supports redevelopment and infill objectives.

The Comprehensive Plan encourages redevelopment and infill on larger assembled lots. When combined with the adjacent city-owned lot, this property creates a larger development area that can accommodate multifamily housing consistent with preferred land-use patterns.

The purchase advances compact and efficient land-use strategies.

The Plan highlights the community's limited supply of residential land and the need to maximize efficient use of serviced areas. Multifamily development on this parcel would reduce pressure for outward or blufftop expansion by concentrating housing where utilities and infrastructure already exist.

The proposed acquisition supports the Housing Vision Statement.

The Housing Vision directs the City to grow a diverse housing stock serving young professionals, first-time homebuyers, empty nesters, and seniors. The Plan specifically notes the need for more alternatives to single-family housing. Development enabled by this acquisition could provide the type of units that help residents age in place and increase overall housing options.

The property supports goals related to senior housing shortages.

The Plan reports that seniors remain in single-family homes due to lack of suitable options and expresses strong community desire for senior apartments, condos, and assisted living facilities. A future multifamily project—including potentially accessible or elevator-served units—would directly implement this strategy.

The acquisition aligns with land-use and transportation goals promoting walkability and downtown vitality.

The Plan encourages adding residential density near downtown to increase walkability, reduce automobile dependency, and support local businesses. Multifamily housing at this location would place additional residents within walking distance of downtown and key services, supporting those policy goals.

Overall, the proposed purchase is in compliance with and advances multiple core policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The property is suitable for multifamily development, an expressly supported land-use type, and aligns with policies regarding housing supply, infill development, senior housing, walkability, and compact growth patterns.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Niemeier. Upon a roll call vote taken and tallied by Josh Tarrence, Building Inspector, the following members voted in favor thereof, viz;

Greg Husmann	Yes
Ryan Niemeier	Yes
Jerry Steffes	Yes
Don Hogan	Yes

and none voted against the same. Jon Wilson abstained from the vote. The motion was declared duly carried.

Item 7. Sustainability and Resilience Plan- draft

Sustainability Coordinator Jason Ludwigson was present and addressed the Planning Commission in regards to the draft Sustainability and Resilience Plan. This item was informational only with no action taken.

Item 8. Future Agenda Items

Ex-Officio City Council Representative Chris Langen addressed the Commission about a possible group meeting to discuss the City's long-range plan.

Item 9. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Vice Chair Husmann. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Welch.

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 6:38PM.



Item: 1.2

STAFF REPORT

To: Planning Commission Members
From: Cassie Hanan, City Administrator
Date: August 4, 2026
Re: Consideration of property purchase option

The City of La Crescent is considering an offer to purchase property described as the NW-SW 40 acres of Parcel 01-000-0990. This property is located in a Bluffland Conservation Area as identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The purchase would expand the existing North End Park from 28.38 acres of protected bluffland to 67.05 acres of protected bluffland. The Findings of Fact are attached to this memo.

The City is receiving grant funding of \$160,000 from the FY27 Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program and has also received donations for the purchase totaling \$100,000. This purchase would serve to protect bluffland in perpetuity. I recommend the Planning Commission adopt the Findings of Fact and recommend the purchase of the property to the City Council.

PROPOSED PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS: PURCHASE OF NW-SW 40 acres of Parcel 01-000-0990

The City of La Crescent is considering an offer to purchase property described as the NW-SW 40 acres of Parcel 01-000-0990. This property is located in a Bluffland Conservation Area as identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The purchase would expand the existing North End Park from 28.38 acres of protected bluffland to 67.05 acres of protected bluffland.

The purchase aligns with the goals and mission of the Bluffland Coalition and The Blufflands Plan.

The City of La Crescent is a member of the Blufflands Coalition, an organization whose mission is to identify new, creative ways to conserve the blufflands that support their member communities and preserve the region's unique identity. The coalition's primary goals are to protect land near urban areas from development, preserve natural spaces for habitat restoration, and create an accessible space for public recreation. In 2016, the coalition adopted "The Blufflands *A Plan for Conservation and Recreation Throughout the La Crosse-La Crescent Region*". The plan can be found here: [la-crosse-area-bluffland-plan-final-draft.pdf](#) The purchase of this property would align with the mission of this plan.

The purchase is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's goals for bluffland preservation. The City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan (2016) outlines several goals and objectives to support bluffland preservation.

Element: Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation

- **Goal 1**
Natural features and ecosystems in the La Crescent area will be conserved and restored.
Objective 1.2
Blufftops overlooking and visible from La Crescent and the approaching highways will be permanently protected from further development.
- **Goal 2**
Public access to and recreational use of parks, blufflands and waterways will be expanded and improved in the La Crescent area.
Objective 2.8
As access to natural areas increases, there will continue to be wild and secluded places with limited human visitation.
- **Strategies**
*7. Implement the Blufflands Plan, **especially land acquisition** or protection and development of a contiguous trail route around the City. Collaborate with La Crescent Township and private landowners to establish a contiguous trail network in the bluffs immediately surrounding the City for hiking, biking, snowshoeing and*

cross-country skiing. Identify former logging roads and current snowmobile trails as possible linkages between existing sites and trail segments. Work with the Bluffland Coalition or similar regional entity to enhance the use of bluffland trails in the La Crescent area, including identification of public access sites on regional bluffland maps and use of common trail signage standards. Continue to collaborate with the Minnesota Land Trust to identify and pursue acquisition of bluffland sites for protection from development and public access improvements.

- Future Land Use Map: The parcel is also identified as “Blufflands Conservation Area” on the Future Land Use map in the Comprehensive Plan. The Bluffland Conservation category is intended to protect from development most of the blufflands immediately surrounding the City and especially those bluffs visible from the City and the approaching highways.

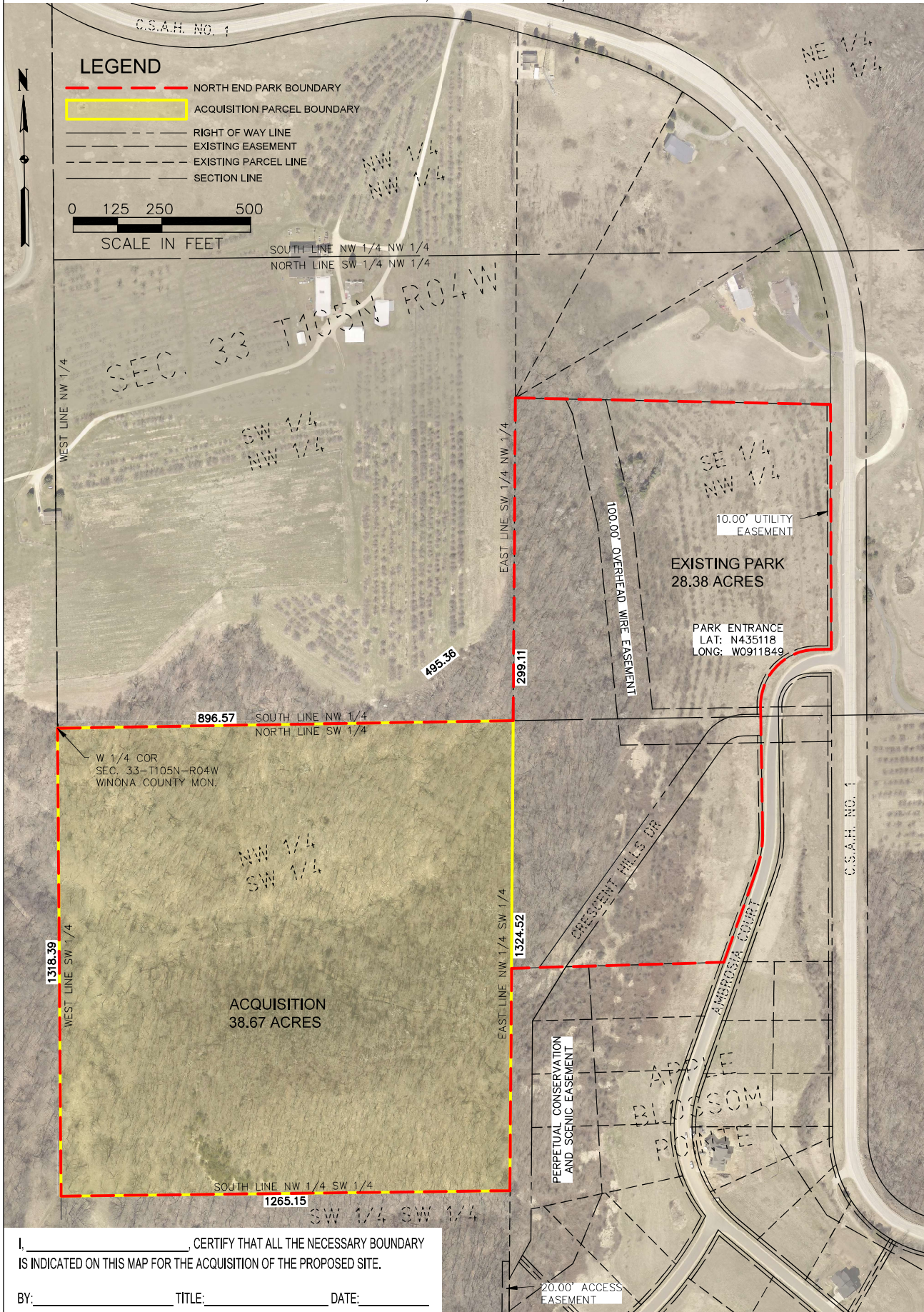
The purchase is consistent with goals outlined in the City of La Crescent Park & Recreation Plan (2022).

This property is located within the City’s Park Service area and would expand the existing North End Park from 28.38 acres of protected bluffland to 67.05 acres. Hiking and walking would be allowed and would expand recreational opportunities for the public. By acquiring the 38.67-acre bluffland parcel the City will be able to continue development of the River to Ridge trail. The public hiking trail would loop from the Sportsman's Boat Landing at the Mississippi River around the city and end at south 7th Street near Kistler Park. The River to Ridge trail would be about 7 miles in length when completed.

In summary, the purchase of this property for bluffland preservation is consistent with the City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan (2016), the Bluffland Coalition’s plan, and the City of La Crescent Park & Recreation Plan (2022). It supports the long-term goals of the City to preserve natural spaces and protect the area from further development.

NORTH END PARK BOUNDARY

C.S.A.H. NO. 1, WINONA COUNTY, MN



I, _____, CERTIFY THAT ALL THE NECESSARY BOUNDARY IS INDICATED ON THIS MAP FOR THE ACQUISITION OF THE PROPOSED SITE.

BY: _____ TITLE: _____ DATE: _____

SCALE:	1" = 250'
DRAWN BY:	ADM
DATE:	2/24/2026
PROJECT NO.	7319.26
CADD NO.:	7319.26_FRUIT ACRES BOUNDARY

FOR:	NORTH END PARK CITY OF LA CRESCENT SEC. 33 T105N R04W WINONA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
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ATTACHMENT A: SCOPE OF SERVICES

PLAN ELEMENT #1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

MSA will use the following methods to maintain clarity about scope and schedule, and work through challenges that arise during the process.

- A detailed scope at project startup, including agreement on methods and schedule.
- A thorough Project Initiation Meeting with City staff.
- Four (4) remote check-ins between MSA and City staff ahead of Planning Commission meetings. Generally, these meetings will be 30 minutes long.

Following each Planning Commission meeting, MSA will provide a seven-day review period for Commissioners to review the Chapters provided in its final graphic design format and solicit one final round of review and comments. Comments shall be compiled by City staff and submitted to MSA as a single document to streamline edits and decision-making.

PLAN ELEMENT #2: PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Planning Commission Meetings

As the primary working group for this process, the Planning Commission (PC) will validate, supplement, and edit plan content. MSA will facilitate a total of five (5) meetings with the Planning Commission and will attend each meeting in person.

- PC Mtg 1: Updated Chapter 1 Snapshot + Existing Plans Review; Issues & Opportunities Discussion
- PC Mtg 2: Updated Chapter 2: Goals, Objectives, Strategies
- PC Mtg 3: Updated Chapter 3: Land Use & Community Design
- PC Mtg 4: Full Draft Review, inclusive of updated Chapter 4: Implementation & Action Plan
- PC Mtg 5: Public Hearing and Plan Recommendation

City Council Adoption

MSA will attend this meeting remotely.

Stakeholder Focus Groups (or Interviews)

MSA will conduct up to three (3) remote (held over Microsoft Teams) focus groups or interviews with key community stakeholders in the initial phase of the planning. City staff will identify a list of individuals and organizations (with contact information) with MSA scheduling the meeting time.

Online Community Survey

MSA will conduct one (1) online survey through SurveyMonkey. The survey results will be placed in an appendix (using output from SurveyMonkey) with salient statistics shared in the plan to reinforce specific goals, objectives and strategies.

Pop-Up Events Assistance

City staff will set up a booth or tent at outdoor events during the planning process to garner feedback and design ideas. MSA will provide materials/activities for up to two (2) events that can be used to garner feedback and share information on the process.

Community Visioning Workshop

MSA will facilitate a public input meeting at the start of the planning process to yield feedback on the community vision, current issues and opportunities, and provide background about the plan and the process to update it. This meeting will be held ahead of, and on the same day as, Planning Commission Meeting #1. MSA will provide a summary of the meeting, which will be included in the plan.

PLAN ELEMENT #3: DOCUMENT UPDATE

Relevant Plan Review & Inclusion

MSA will complete a review and summary of relevant local and regional plans to inform updates to the plan's goals, objectives and strategies.

Document Updates

MSA will work with staff to update all chapters of the existing plan. It is understood that the majority of Chapter 2 is still relevant, requiring only minor updates per recent plans, public outreach through this planning process, and other recent best practices. Chapters 3 and 4 will receive more extensive review.

Community Indicators Report (in Appendix)

The existing Community Indicators Report will be reduced in size, providing more graphics to hit on the most important factors for each plan element. Expected demographic and economic data will include, but are not limited to: population projections; age, sex, and race/ethnicity; household and median income; housing tenure, and housing costs; major employers and industries; etc.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

The following items can be added to the scope of work via contract amendment at the following rates:

- Additional In-Person meeting: \$1,550 (includes reimbursables)
- Additional Remote meeting: \$650
- Public Meeting (on the same night as MSA-attended Planning Commission meeting): \$2,000