PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
October 20, 2026 Meeting Summary
7:00 PM

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Joe Peterson; Corey Kolquist; Beth Wentzlaff; John Stauber; Matthew Fournier; Kevin Hagen; Amanda Radzak; and Ryan Johnson

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Eric Johnson, Community Development Director; John Mulder, City Administrator; Joe Wicklund, Asst. City Administrator; David Bolf, City Engineer; Tom Johnson; Hermantown; Mickey Pearson; Hermantown; Kim Parmeter; Midway; Tim Resberg, Hermantown; Jeremy Lambert, Superior; Patrick O'Connell, Chisholm; Tony Walli, Superior; Dan Nordling, Hermantown; Jackie Dolentz, Hermantown; Sarah Lofald, Hermantown; Derek Pedersen, Proctor; Richard Winkler, Duluth; JoAnn Bates, Hermantown; Bob Kohlmeier, Hermantown; Eleanor Dolan, Duluth; Ahnika Berg, Duluth; Dawn LaPointe, Hermantown; Cathy Kohlmeier, Hermantown; Meagan Elling, Solway; Candi Mock, Hermantown; Joyce Hoyen, Duluth; David Dispasquale, Duluth; Tom Bates, Hermantown; David Thornton, Hermantown; Clarissa Ek, Solway; Jim Klukkert, Duluth; Allison Hafften, Solway; Lisa Bodine, Duluth; Virginia Lord;

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Corey Kolquist to approve the October 20, 2026 agenda as presented. Seconded by Kevin Hagen. Motion carried 7-0.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Matthew Fournier to approve the September 15, 2026 minutes as presented. Seconded by John Stauber. Motion carried 7-0.

4. PUBLIC HEARING

4A. An application for a Special Use Permit by Harmony Group, LLC for the development of up to three (3) Communication Services Facility (data center) buildings, office/support buildings, auxiliary buildings, and associated site improvements including utilities electrical/mechanical support equipment, stormwater management facilities, parking and access drives, pedestrian circulation, and landscaping to support the overall use and function of the campus. The property is located in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road. The property is located in a BLM, Business and Light Manufacturing zoning district.

Eric Johnson, Community Development Director, presented the application from Harmony Group, LLC, requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) to develop a 1.66-million-square-foot technology campus featuring

three data center buildings, three mechanical buildings, a two-story office, an auxiliary/fire pump house, private substations, noise walls, 570 parking spaces, and supporting stormwater, access, pedestrian, and landscaping improvements. The secured campus will have gated primary access and emergency-only access from Morris Thomas Road.

Environmental review was completed through an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR), adopted and approved by the City on October 5, 2026, under Resolution No. 2026-124. The final AUAR was submitted to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB), and all relevant environmental issues have been addressed.

The project is located in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road within the Business and Light Manufacturing (BLM) zoning district.

The Applicant has obtained signed concurrence from all property owners within the project area for the proposed light industrial use and associated applications and permits.

The Applicant proposes a multi-building data center campus at Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road, including:

- Three 375,000-square-foot data center buildings.
- Three 150,000-square-foot mechanical buildings.
- One 60,000-square-foot, two-story office/support building.
- One 30,000-square-foot auxiliary/fire pump building.
- Three utility pads totaling approximately 200,000 square feet.
- Three equipment yards totaling approximately 750,000 square feet.
- Approximately 570 parking spaces.
- Seven stormwater detention basins totaling approximately 12.3 acres.
- Project construction is anticipated to occur over 6–8 years.

The project is anticipated to be built over 6–8 years and includes:

Data Centers: Three 375,000-square-foot buildings, approximately 33 feet tall, housing IT infrastructure for data storage, processing, and transmission.

Office Building: One two-story, 60,000-square-foot building, approximately 41 feet tall, providing staff offices and amenities.

Mechanical Buildings: Three 150,000-square-foot buildings housing cooling and mechanical equipment, up to 56 feet tall.

Auxiliary/Fire Pump Building: One 30,000-square-foot, 30-foot-tall building for storage, logistics, and fire pump functions.

Utility Pads: Three pads totaling 200,000 square feet for private electrical substations.

Equipment Yards: Three yards adjacent to the data centers to house backup generators.

The property is zoned Business and Light Manufacturing (BLM). The Applicant has requested a Special Use Permit (SUP) and Preliminary and Final Plat, which the Planning and Zoning Commission will recommend to the City Council.

The SUP covers building placement and sizes, site layout, stormwater, utilities, landscaping, and screening. Future development may proceed through a Zoning Certificate if consistent with the approved Master Plan and Project Development Agreement.

Master Plan approval is valid for 10 years. The Community Development Director may approve minor modifications under Section 535.04.12 of the Zoning Ordinance. Major changes, including increased building footprints or height, require a modified application and new SUP approval.

David Bolf, City Engineer, presented the project's stormwater grading, public utilities, and transportation improvements to the Commission.

Vic Lund, St. Louis County Traffic Engineer, presented the Traffic Impact Analysis to the Commission.

Eric went on to show the architectural layout and features of each of the three buildings, the communication services facility - data center building; the mechanical buildings; and the auxiliary and fire pump building.

Eric then presented the park dedication, the wetlands and landscaping for the project.

The following people spoke regarding their support of the proposed Data Center.

Tom Johnson, Hermantown; Mickey Pearson, Duluth; Kim Parmeter, Midway; Jeremy Lambert, Superior; Patrick O'Connell, Chisholm; Derek Pedersen, Proctor; Lisa Bodine, Duluth;

The following individuals who spoke in opposition to the proposed Data Center project, and raised the following concerns:

Tim Resberg, Hermantown; Jackie Dolentz, Hermantown; Richard Winkler, Duluth; Bob Kohlmeier, Hermantown; Dawn LaPointe, Hermantown; Meagan Elling, Solway; Candi Mock, Hermantown; Tom Bates, Hermantown; David Thornton, Hermantown; Clarissa Ek, Solway; Jim Klukkert, Duluth; Allison Hafften, Solway; Virginia Lord, Superior;

Individuals speaking in opposition to the proposed Data Center raised the following concerns:

- The project is incompatible with the surrounding residential area due to its size, location, and proximity to residents.
- Potential impacts on neighboring property values and noise concerns.
- The project should be classified as heavy industrial rather than light manufacturing.
- The project does not align with the original Comprehensive Plan guidelines.
- Objections to approval of the AUAR and questions regarding the status and availability of the SUP application.
- Concerns regarding ongoing litigation and whether the SUP should be considered while lawsuits remain pending.

- Support for a moratorium on the project.
- Concerns that Harmony Group does not own all of the property, including approximately 80 acres owned by another party, and whether the applicant has the required written authorization to submit a SUP application.
- Questions regarding Google's interpretation of light manufacturing zoning and whether a Data Center qualifies as a permitted use.
- Concerns about the project's transparency, alleged deception, and the conduct of those involved in the process.
- Concerns regarding Google's interest in smaller communities and whether residents' concerns are being adequately considered.
- Strong opposition to the project.

Commission member, Beth Wentzlaff, commented that she is very concerned about the pending lawsuits and is very concerned about the unanswered questions and feels the commission is getting the horse out of the coral long before there is a cart built. She believes in data centers, but she does not approve about how this came about, and the change to the Comprehensive Plan changed by one signature of one person on the City Staff without the commission's knowledge.

Motion made by Ryan Johnson to approve the application for a Special Use Permit by Harmony Group, LLC for the development of up to three (3) Communication Services Facility (data center) buildings, office/support buildings, auxiliary buildings, and associated site improvements including utilities electrical/mechanical support equipment, stormwater management facilities, parking and access drives, pedestrian circulation, and landscaping to support the overall use and function of the campus. The property is located in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road. The property is located in a BLM, Business and Light Manufacturing zoning district. Seconded by Corey Kolquist. Motion carried. 6-1

4B. An application for a Preliminary and Final Plat by Harmony Group, LLC for a 3 lot development. The property is located in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road. The property is located in a BLM, Business and Light Manufacturing zoning district.

Eric presented that the Applicant, Harmony Group, LLC, is requesting approval of a Preliminary and Final Plat (PLAT) associated with a multi-building development of up to three (3) Data Center/Communication Service Facility buildings along with one (1) general office/support buildings, one (1) auxiliary/fire pump building, and associated site improvements including utilities, electrical/mechanical support equipment, stormwater management facilities, parking and access drives, pedestrian circulation, and landscaping to support the overall use and function of the campus.

The Applicant is proposing the constructing of a multi-building Communication Service Facility (data center) campus in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road (Project). The proposed project consists of the following elements:

- 3 – 375,000 square foot data center/communication facility buildings
- 3 – 150,000 square foot mechanical buildings
- 1 – 60,000 square foot 2-story (30,00 SF each) general office/support buildings
- 1 – 30,000 square foot auxiliary/fire pump building
- 3 – utility pads of approximately 200,000 square feet total

- 3 – equipment yards approximately 250,000 square feet each (750,000 square feet total)
- Approximately 570 parking spaces
- 7 – stormwater detention basins approximately 536,560 square feet (approximately 12.3 acres)

Motion made by Corey Kolquist to approve the application for a Preliminary and Final Plat by Harmony Group, LLC for a 3 lot development. The property is located in the southwest quadrant of Morris Thomas Road and Midway Road. The property is located in a BLM, Business and Light Manufacturing zoning district. Seconded by John Stauber. Motion carried. 6-1.

4C. An application by Vermillion Homes, Inc. for a Zoning Map Amendment (rezoning) of parcel 395-0133-00040 which consist of 6.0 acres. The parcel is currently zoned C-1, Office/Light Industrial with a proposed rezoning to C, Commercial.

Eric advised the Commission that the Applicant, Vermillion Homes, is requesting to rezone parcel 395-0133-00040 from C-1, Office/Light Industrial to C, Commercial.

The Applicant has marketed the property for several years and is negotiating the sale of approximately three acres to an auto/truck sales and repair business. In 2023, the property was rezoned from C, Commercial to C-1, Office/Light Industrial to accommodate a proposed landscape contractor business; however, the sale did not occur.

The proposed three-acre parcel would not meet the minimum lot width and size requirements of the C-1 district. Rezoning to C, Commercial, which has no minimum lot width or lot size requirements, would allow the parcel split and create an additional lot for future development.

Eric clarified that rezoning does not constitute development approval. Any future development will require an approved Commercial Industrial Development Permit (CIDP) and must comply with all applicable City regulations, including zoning, stormwater management, and wetland requirements.

Motion made by Beth Wentzlaff to approve the application by Vermillion Homes, Inc. for a Zoning Map Amendment (rezoning) of parcel 395-0133-00040 which consist of 6.0 acres. The parcel is currently zoned C-1, Office/Light Industrial with a proposed rezoning to C, Commercial. Seconded by Corey Kolquist. Motion carried 7-0.

5. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Dawn LaPointe, Hermantown – expressed anger and disappointment over what she described as a lack of transparency, misinformation, and disregard for residents and the environment. She also criticized the actions of City staff, Council members, and Commissioners throughout the process.

6. CONTINUING BUSINESS

None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Eric advised that the November agenda is expected to be busy, with approximately five to six separate applications scheduled for consideration.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Correspondence: 2026-658; and 2026-660 – 2026-673; 2026-692 – 2026-694; and 2026-696 – 2026-703.

9. COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS

Joe Peterson – None
Corey Kolquist – None
Beth Wentzlaff – None
Kevin Hagen – None
Matthew Fournier – None
John Stauber – None
Amanda Radzak – None
Ryan Johnson – None

ADJOURN

Motion made by John Stauber to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Kevin Hagen. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 pm.

Officiated by:	Transcribed by:
Joe Peterson, Chairman	Mary Melde, Administrative Assistant