

**CITY OF NISSWA
MINUTES – CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
GRAND VIEW LODGE
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 – 3:30 P.M.
NISSWA CITY HALL**

Members present: Jennifer Carnahan, Bruce London, Joe Hall, Mark Froehle, Jesse Zahn
City staff present: Maggi Wentler, Interim City Administrator and Tom Blomer, Public Works Director

Audience members: 34 members of the public were present

A. Call to Order

Mayor Jennifer Carnahan called the City of Nisswa Special Council Meeting to order on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 3:30 PM at Nisswa City Hall.

Before proceeding, Mayor Carnahan addressed public concerns regarding transparency, noting that no informational packet had been prepared in advance of the meeting. She expressed repeated disappointment with this practice, stating that the absence of pre-meeting materials creates unnecessary public distrust and speculation. She also noted with disappointment that City Planner Steven Timblin was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict, as many of the topics to be discussed fell within his area of responsibility.

Mayor Carnahan provided context for the meeting, explaining that the purpose was to address long-standing code, permitting, operational, planning and zoning, and public access questions involving the Grand View Lodge property. She noted that some of these issues became more complicated in the summer of 2025 following administrative enforcement letters sent to Grand View by an interim city administrator — without the knowledge of the Council — which prompted a Special Council Meeting on August 19, 2025. At that prior meeting, the Council voted unanimously to suspend the administrative citation fines and directed the City and Grand View to meet collaboratively to find solutions before the end of the year. That collaborative meeting never occurred, leading to the convening of the present session.

City Administrator Maggi Wentler and Council Member Hall noted that the Agenda was intentionally kept broad under state statute to allow all relevant topics to be discussed without restriction.

B. Grand View Lodge Discussion

Background and Grand View's Opening Statement

Dawn Southworth, Managing Director of Grand View Lodge, addressed the Council and thanked all members for convening the meeting. She emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to consolidate what had been a series of fragmented, one-off conversations into a single, unified discussion before the full Council. She clarified that Grand View's primary concern was not adversarial — it was about finding a workable, partnership-based path forward on the public access area located at the end of West Linden Boulevard.

Ms. Southworth outlined the core tension: Grand View has, over many years, taken on significant responsibility for maintaining the public access area — including plowing in winter, maintaining the sand, managing emergency vehicle access, and monitoring unauthorized parking — yet the resort was threatened with fines for placing a seasonal shed and barricades in the area. She framed the resort's position as seeking clarity on ownership and responsibilities, not seeking to eliminate public access. She stated: "It's not about taking it over... if it's going to stay as public access, then we need to understand who owns what, and we need for the city to take care of the area

Historical and Surveying Context

Council Member Hall provided background on the surveying history of the access corridor. He noted that WSN, a surveying firm retained by both Grand View and the City, had investigated the matter and found conflicting historical records. Current Crow Wing County GIS data reflects a 25-foot easement, though earlier records suggest the original platted width may have been 50 feet. The surveyor was unable to definitively resolve the discrepancy due to improperly recorded historical vacations dating back to the 1930s through 1950s.

Mark Ronnei, a former Grand View employee with approximately 43 years of institutional history at the resort, addressed the Council as a member of the public. He acknowledged responsibility for much of the long-standing ambiguity, having overseen planning and zoning presentations for the property over several decades. He confirmed that multiple surveys of the broader Grand View area would reveal roads that were vacated, partially vacated, improperly recorded, or never developed — and that the resort's main entrance road is not, in fact, built on city property. He indicated that the original developer, Mr. Baker, designed the 50-foot access strips for the benefit of the adjacent residential lot owners — not as formal public boat launches — and that the intent was pedestrian access to the lake. He noted that no boat or trailer had ever successfully launched from the access, and that designating it as a pedestrian-only access had been discussed with prior councils approximately 25 years ago, though the effort stalled when the DNR declined to take a position. He recommended formalizing the access as pedestrian-only, establishing clear rules, and pursuing a written agreement between the City and Grand View — something he acknowledged was never accomplished during his own tenure.

Council Member Hall confirmed, in his capacity as Assistant Fire Chief, that the access corridor — including with the shed in place — has always been sufficient for fire apparatus to access the area. He noted that the access serves the entire surrounding neighborhood, not exclusively Grand View guests, and that the City's zodiac rescue boat can be hand-carried to the water without requiring any formal launch infrastructure.

Public Comment

Several residents and interested parties offered public comment:

Jim Anderson (4354 East Linden), a property owner with multiple lots on East Linden, stated that the access strips were determined to be dedicated streets by the city attorney in approximately 1990 when Grand View sought to relocate the east access. He asserted that the platted width should govern regardless of vehicle size changes over time, and expressed concern that Grand View should not be permitted to place permanent or semi-permanent structures within

the access corridor. He noted that a public access sign on the east side had disappeared and requested it be restored.

Mark Ronnei (returning to the microphone) clarified that language in historical plat documents regarding dedication to the public was ambiguous — it was unclear whether the dedication applied to the access strips themselves or only to the adjacent streets. He suggested that a title attorney would be required to fully resolve the question.

Fred Heidmann, a longtime resident with familiarity with the plats, cautioned the Council that the access strips may not technically be public accesses in the conventional sense — they may instead be private accesses created for the benefit of the adjacent platted lot owners. He noted that the City had previously vacated similar strips elsewhere in town upon petition by adjoining landowners, with each side receiving half the vacated area. He suggested that the people with the clearest standing regarding these strips are the property owners along West and East Linden, and encouraged a focus on practical, neighborhood-level solutions.

Dawn Musick (West Linden Boulevard, non-lakeside) stated that she regularly uses the West Linden access for swimming and that there is room for approximately two cars to park if the corridor is 50 feet wide. She raised a question about whether allowing Grand View to obtain a temporary permit for their seasonal shed would set a precedent allowing residents to similarly store paddleboards or other equipment at the access.

Craig Wilfahrt, owner of two properties on East Linden, stated that historical documents he had reviewed indicated the boat landing and beach access were dedicated "forever." He reported that during a winter fishing contest, he was unable to access the lake via the corridor because it was blocked — though Council Member Hall subsequently clarified that access restrictions during fishing contests are controlled by the Crow Wing County Sheriff's Department, not Grand View.

Brett Cote (East Linden Boulevard), who had previously raised concerns with the Council in writing and in person at the August 2025 meeting, stated that his concerns stemmed from the cumulative effect of multiple factors in recent years: the seasonal shed, an additional storage tent, kayak and paddleboard racks on the beach within the access area, and — most significantly — a dock placed in the water that he felt effectively blocked the waterward opening of the access corridor. He suggested that a simple, low-cost solution would be adequate: replace barricades with pylons or signage indicating no parking in the public access, maintain a clear 25-foot unobstructed view from the street straight to the water, and ensure Grand View staff understand that members of the public may use the corridor without a resort wristband. He stated that Grand View docking arrangements in the water were his "last straw," though Council members noted this was outside the City's jurisdiction — that authority resting with the Minnesota DNR above the Ordinary Highwater Mark.

Mary Jetland (East Linden and Old Government Trail) raised a broader concern about the increase in watercraft activity originating from Grand View, including rentals of jet skis and other watercraft to guests with limited experience. She questioned whether an emergency watercraft access was needed given the increased activity. Council Member Hall responded that the City's zodiac rescue boat, donated by the Lions Club approximately three years ago, can be transported by hand or ATV to any point on the lake without a formal launch ramp, and that no fixed access infrastructure is required for emergency response.

Craig Willeford (Dutchman's Bluff) noted that winter usage patterns differ significantly from summer and urged the Council to account for ice fishing traffic and snowmobile access in any solution developed.

Bob Feir (South Gull Lake area) suggested the City explore a shared storage solution similar to one used by Minneapolis Parks — a rentable, modular storage unit placed at the access — and proposed forming a small committee of a council member, citizens, and a Grand View representative to develop a plan over three to four months, with a temporary permit issued to Grand View for the current season in the interim.

Jurisdictional Clarification

Council Member Zahn raised the question of whether the Minnesota DNR had jurisdiction over the access. Council Member Hall clarified that the DNR's jurisdiction begins at the Ordinary Highwater Mark (OHW); everything landward of the OHW falls within the City's purview. Council Member Zahn noted that the question of dock placement within the water — which had been raised by Mr. Cote — would accordingly need to be addressed with the DNR rather than the City Council.

Council Member Zahn raised a concern that the Council was being asked to make a formal decision without the participation of Planning and Zoning Director Timblin or the City Attorney — both of whom were absent from the meeting.

Motion by Council Member Hall, seconded by Council Member London, to allow Grand View Lodge to place one seasonal structure at the access corridor between April and October, maintain easily movable barricades, and have the City provide appropriate public access signage, with the corridor kept open. Vote: Hall – Aye; London – Aye; Zahn – Nay; Froehle – Nay. Mayor Carnahan, citing the absence of the Planning and Zoning Director and City Attorney as determinative, voted Nay. Motion failed 2–3.

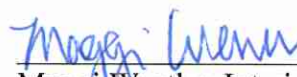
Motion by Council Member Zahn, seconded by Council Member Froehle, to commission a task force committee consisting of Mayor Carnahan, Council Member Hall, City Administrator Wentler, Planning and Zoning Director Timblin, Public Works Director Blomer, and Grand View Lodge representatives, to develop a resolution regarding public access restrictions and the temporary shed structure, with a proposed solution to be presented at the May 19, 2026 regular City Council meeting. Vote: Froehle – Aye; London – Aye; Zahn – Aye; Hall – Aye; Mayor Carnahan – Aye. Motion carried 5–0.

C. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Mayor Carnahan, seconded by Council Member London. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jennifer Carnahan, Mayor


Maggi Wentler, Interim City Administrator