



PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Monday, January 5, 2026 * 5:00 PM * Court Room
13600 Juneau Boulevard, Elm Grove, WI 53122

1/5/2026 - Minutes

1. Roll call

President Koleski called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present:

- President Koleski
- Ms. Becker
- Mr. Cashin
- Mr. Fronberry
- Ms. Peter
- Ms. Stuckert
- Mr. Termuehlen (arrived at 5:02 p.m.)

Absent:

- None.

Also Present:

- Thomas Harrigan, Village Manager
- Ethan Sowl, Assistant Village Manager / Zoning & Planning Administrator

2. Review and act on meeting minutes dated December 1, 2025

Mr. Cashin made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Becker seconded. Motion passed 7-0.

3. Interview Consultants for Integrated Comprehensive and Downtown Master Plan

President Koleski stated that the Commission, as previously discussed, will be interviewing the three finalists this evening. Each consultant will have 20 minutes for their presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session with the Commission. Each commissioner is encouraged to ask one question per interview.

Studio gwa / Redevelopment Resources

Represented by Kristen Fish-Peterson and Dayna Sarver of Redevelopment Resources and Ashley Sarver, Aaron Halvorsen, and Michael Smith of Studio gwa, the consultant delivered a timed 20-minute presentation to the Commission.

Ms. Peter asked if the two consultant firms work together often. Fish-Peterson and A. Sarver stated that they frequently work together on projects similar to Elm Grove's, but also complete projects individually.

[Mr. Termuehlen, Ms. Stuckert, and Mr. Fronberry asked questions; however, the meeting recording did not pick their voices up.]

Ms. Becker asked how they have handled individuals who are resistant to redevelopment or the project at-large in past work. Fish-Peterson stated that they have used a PR firm in the past for a particularly controversial project, using a "diffuse and enthuse" strategy to address negative voices while also ensuring they feel included in the project. A. Sarver stated that, in these situations, it is also incumbent upon the consultant to adjust plan concepts if the community is unsupportive of it.

Mr. Cashin asked what they thought is unique about Elm Grove. Additionally, Cashin asked where there are areas of growth for the Village. A. Sarver stated that Elm Grove's natural beauty and old growth trees are impressive. Sarver observed that a section of the Village's downtown is very walkable with nice lighting, while the section west of the tracks is less walkable and is designed to make people feel closer to the street, albeit still probably inclusive of many great businesses.

President Koleski asked if the project team has had experience in making people determine priorities in the public engagement process, specifically utilizing nominal voting/scaling techniques. Fish-Peterson stated that she has facilitated an activity utilizing Monopoly money to encourage participants to place a dollar amount on their choices. D. Sarver stated that she has found that including an open-ended "Other" question in online surveys encourages respondents to provide quantifiable anecdotal data.

RINKA / MSA

Represented by Eric Mayne of RINKA and Stephen Tremlett, Brian Wiedenfeld, and Morgan Shapiro of MSA, the consultant delivered a timed 20-minute presentation to the Commission.

Mr. Fronberry asked how the project team handles change throughout a planning process. Tremlett stated that it is about listening to property owners and constituents and hearing what their direction is to identify strategies to help the community thrive.

Ms. Becker stated that the visuals provided in the proposal and presentation are lovely, emphasizing branding is an important aspect of a successful plan. Becker shared her concern that the two consultants have not worked together in the past, asking how responsibilities would be divided amongst both groups. Mayne responded that RINKA would be primarily responsible for the downtown plan, with MSA leading the comprehensive plan. Becker asserted the importance that the downtown plan be naturally embedded within the overall comprehensive plan. Mayne stated that it is to the Village's benefit having two teams of experts working on this project. Mayne stated that the comprehensive plan will launch earlier, particularly to gather important data. However, Mayne ensured that the two plans will be on parallel tracks. Tremlett emphasized the importance of the project work group, described in detail in the proposal, which will ensure both plans are working in concert.

Mr. Cashin asked if the project team has had any initial thoughts on improving pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow in the downtown. Mayne stated that the Daylighting project will create a buffer along the tracks for improved traffic flow opportunities.

Ms. Peter asked Mayne how he would answer the question, "what would you do with Elm Grove next?" Mayne stated that there could be more placemaking-type destinations within the downtown.

Mr. Termuehlen stated that Elm Grove is largely built out, emphasizing the importance of engaging with property owners within the downtown to achieve community goals. Termuehlen asked what strategies the project team would suggest in aligning downtown property owners with the Village's vision, particularly if they don't share in that vision. Mayne stated that aligning with existing landowners in an effort to help them better understand the benefits to their interests in addition to community benefits is important. Tremlett stated that identifying low-hanging fruit opportunities for redevelopment or enhancement of the downtown is important at the outset to gather buy-in from surrounding property owners.

Ms. Stuckert stated that public survey issued as part of the 2019 downtown planning effort asked residents what amenities and types of development they would like to see. However, some of the answers ended up including lengthy, unrealistic wish lists of items without an understanding of their market feasibility. Stuckert asked how the project team would ask the right questions so as not to repeat the past. Shapiro, who would be responsible for developing the survey questions, stated that achieving a more holistic understanding of what residents love about

Elm Grove is important. Understanding why residents choose to live in the community, what they think about the schools, parks, and other community resources is important in informing their preferences on economic development within the downtown.

President Koleski asked how the project team would look at the downtown from massing standpoint; what have other communities of Elm Grove's size done to retain, attract, and repurpose? Tremlett stated that it is important to identify a small, but catalytic site to reinvigorate the downtown. Tremlett stated that the Village should also continue to invest in the downtown, including in pathways or sidewalks to make it more walkable.

Vandewalle & Associates

Represented by Jackie Minch, Meredith Perks, and Jeff Maloney, the consultant delivered a timed 20-minute presentation to the Commission.

Ms. Peter asked if the project team has any ideas or suggestions for parking within the downtown. Minch emphasized the importance of on-street parking policies, specifically including time limits. Additionally, encouraging joint parking within the downtown is another strategy.

Mr. Termuehlen stated that many property owners within the downtown have their own parking arrangements with nearby properties, but that there is not always a rhyme-or-reason to it when viewing the downtown as a whole. Termuehlen asked how the project team would suggest engaging with property owners to address this issue. Maloney suggested some sort of Village participation in reviewing the right-of-way to evaluate on-street parking opportunities. Maloney also suggested providing some restrung design recommendations to property owners to help them see the benefits of different arrangements.

Ms. Stuckert stated that public survey issued as part of the 2019 downtown planning effort asked residents what amenities and types of development they would like to see. However, some of the answers ended up including lengthy, unrealistic wish lists of items without an understanding of their market feasibility. Stuckert asked how the project team would ask the right questions so as not to repeat the past. Maloney stated that survey questions should be framed to help residents understand that their desires for the downtown may require certain types of other development to be realistic.

Mr. Fronberry asked if the project team had any suggestions for potential improvements along Watertown Plank Road. Maloney stated that pedestrian walkway/pathway improvements to the downtown would be helpful. Maloney stated that, ultimately, it would depend on how aggressive the Village wants to be in pursuing development/redevelopment.

Ms. Becker asked how the project team handles opposition to elements of proposed plans in an effort to preserve public trust in the process. Minch stated that, ultimately, the plan is the Village's, not Vandewalle's. Maloney stated that you have to take extra care with people and talk to them about plan elements facing opposition, ensuring everyone is on the same page as to its meaning. Maloney stated that, sometimes, misunderstandings are what creates opposition. Minch stated that they are also not afraid to scale back recommendations while ensuring key plan elements that are important to the community remain.

Mr. Cashin stated that he like their comment of approaching the downtown plan as a refresh or refresh-plus. Cashin asked them to elaborate on how this may apply to Elm Grove. Minch stated that identifying uses that the community would like to attract downtown and what the appetite is for downtown gathering spaces/plazas and providing renderings/visuals of proposed examples. Maloney suggested that an inventory of existing buildings may be helpful to identify opportunities for adaptive reuse, redevelopment and other improvements.

President Koleski stated that he is a very visual person and asked how the project team plans to help the community visualize what is being proposed as part of this planning process. Maloney stated that most of the visuals Vandewalle creates are drawn by hand at a sketch level. This is done purposefully so as not to get the community stuck on specific design details such as facade materials and colors, etc. However, Maloney stressed the importance that visuals identify preferred height, massing, building location, building orientation, and parking.

President Koleski asked how the project team plans to manage those opposed to the project or the "loud voices." Maloney stated that having side conversations with those individuals is important, communicating to them that the purpose of the plan is to communicate to the development community what is acceptable to the Elm Grove community. This is the opportunity to express the community's vision, not as much as when an active development proposal is being considered.

Review of Proposals

President Koleski asked if Trustee Olson, who was in the audience, would like to share his thoughts on the interviews. Olson responded to the concerns surrounding RINKA and MSA's lack of experience working together in the past, recalling his own personal experience in responding to these types of RFPs. Olson stated that choosing the most strategic partner to complete the project at hand is the way these consultants approach collaboration; they are not as concerned about not having worked together in the past.

Olson thought all three consultants did a good job interviewing this evening and that he thought the Vandewalle team did the best job of tailoring their proposal and presentation to Elm Grove.

President Koleski asked if Trustee Schindler, who was in the audience via Zoom during the presentation, would like to share his thoughts. Schindler thought that all consultants interviewed well, but that Studio gwa stuck out the most to him.

President Koleski asked if the Commissioners had thoughts on which consultant they would like to recommend to the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Peter stated that she is particularly sensitive to the Village's working relationship with Vandewalle, having completed the CORP in 2025. However, Peter stated that each firm is well qualified to complete the project. Mr. Termuehlen agreed.

Ms. Stuckert agreed that all three consultants are well qualified to complete the project; however, she would prefer the Village select Studio gwa.

President Koleski expressed some concern on Vandewalle's distinction between the CORP and the comprehensive and downtown master plan. Koleski emphasized that the downtown plan is the truly important element to this effort.

Ms. Becker agreed that all three consultants presented well and that the margins between each are thin. However, Becker still rated Vandewalle the highest.

Mr. Cashin made a motion to recommend the selection of Vandewalle & Associates to complete the Integrated Comprehensive and Downtown Master Plan with the Village to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Peter seconded. Motion passed 7-0.

4. Other Business.

None.

5. Adjournment.

Mr. Cashin made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fronberry seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.