

Keweenaw County Planning Commission
Minutes Regular Meeting (Amended)
October 27, 2025

Roll Call:

John Parsons, Chair/ Present
Bob Pokorski, Vice Chair/ Present
Don Simila, Secretary/ Present
Margaret Kirby/ Absent

Steven Siira/ Present
Harvey Desnick, ZBA Liaison/ Present
Bob DeMarois, ex officio BOC/ Present
Susan Hockings, ZA/ Present

Called to order by Chair at 4:00

Quorum Present: Yes, 6 members Meeting Posted: Yes

Pledge of Allegiance: Recited

Approve Agenda

M/ Simila S/Pokorski Motion carried

Approval of September 29, 2025 minutes as amended to include member notifications of upcoming absences

M/ Parson S/Siira Motion carried

Approval of October 14, 2025 minutes as amended to include notifications of upcoming absences

M/ Simila S/Pokorski Motion carried

Guests: Pat Coleman, North of 45 LLC

Public Comments: None.

ZA Report: Hockings

Tamarack Waterworks update: Requested venue/zoning changes on hold due to contention among property owners; owner postponing until spring; would require definition/rules for wedding venues and text amendment. Data report as requested by Pokorski was made to include a count of new applications received from the previous meeting (31), as well as a year-to-date total (312). PC members asked for a breakdown between types of permits for the next meeting.

BOC Report: DeMarois

The BOC turned down the rezoning request made by Black Bear Inc. despite the Planning Commission's recommended approval. The BOC did approve the rezoning request from Russ Bjorn as recommended by the Planning Commission.

ZBA Report: Desnick

The ZBA approved a setback variance following a public hearing on October 14, 2025, and an upcoming ZBA Public Hearing request has been scheduled for November 3, 2025 for a setback variance from ROW.

New Business:

Master Plan Stakeholders meeting notes were presented to the Planning Commission and public by consultant, Pat Coleman. (see attached)

A summary of this discussion is also attached.

Old Business:

Pat Coleman presented a slide show of the Master Plan Survey results, including community comments. The results will be posted on the Master Plan website (<https://sites.google.com/view/keweenaw-county-master-plan/home>), and on the county website (www.keweenawcountyonline). There was discussion following his presentation, which included an overview and examples of a Master Plan Vision Statement. The members were encouraged to submit their own versions of a vision statement, so that it can be further discussed and perhaps finalized at the next meeting.

Bylaws Review: Simila & DeMarois

Tabled for next meeting

Short-Term Rental Subcommittee: Parsons & Kirby

Tabled for next meeting

Final Comments

Next meetings: November 10, 2025 at 4:00pm

Motion to Adjourn at 6:15pm

- M/ Pokorski S/Siira Motion carried

Recording Secretary: Susan Hockings _____

Planning Commission Secretary: Donald Simila _____



Keweenaw County Master Plan

Stakeholder meeting notes

As part of the community outreach and engagement process, the project consultant, along with several Planning Commissioners, met with the following groups and stakeholders in order to better understand issues and opportunities facing the County. Outlined below are the notes from these interviews.

7-17-25

The Nature Conservancy, Julia Peterson

Provided update on the Heartlands project

USFS Forest Legacy Grant: grant to DNR, DNR will transfer control to local government

- Change in state legislation to enable county to manage the land as a community forest

Business modeling/financial analysis underway

- Revenue projections

- Operating expenses

- Capital

- Sustaining support through a \$2.6 million endowment

8-8-25

Visit Keweenaw (KCVB), Brad Barnett

Consumer changes

- More young and affluent visitors

- Need more community amenities

Markets

- MI = 60%

- Midwest

- Expansions of nationally recognized destinations, Copper Harbor Trails, Mount Bohemia

Visit Keweenaw Revenues

- 5% room tax (motels more than 10 units or voluntary)

- Room rates are increasing

- 1% goes to Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation (UPTRA)

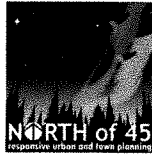
- Enabled by MI PA 59 – CVB. Funds have to be spent on marketing/promotion

- 75% of the area's lodging is in Houghton County

STRs are competition for hotels and don't pay the 5%

Visit Keweenaw has Destination Development Grants = \$100,000 to \$125,000/year

Employee recruitment is an issue



9-22-25

Keweenaw County Historical Society: Laura Bonde, President

KCHS owns and operates

- 12 museums

- 8 sites

- 24 buildings

1,000 members (approximately)

- Aging population is a challenge

- Matching volunteer interest is a challenge

- 50-75 volunteers

Income

- Rentals

- Admissions

- Donations

- Grants

Issues

Believes the County is at max capacity for tourism

Planning Commission should consider:

- Visual landscape

 - Road signs

 - White post guardrails

 - WPA stone works

 - No big box retail stores

 - Historic preservation: development

- Heritage tourism

 - Eagle River

 - Awards for preservation

Inventory of significant buildings and sites is needed

- Existing documents

Speaking as chair of the Eagle Harbor Planning Commission

- Enforce the County Zoning Ordinance

9-22-25

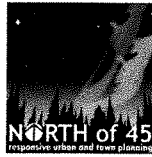
Greg Kingstrom, Keweenaw County Road Commission

Brockway Mountain Drive

- \$9 million project

- Have tried special funding request to MI legislature

- Considered a rural secondary road



Reverting to gravel is not feasible with grades and use-would require maintenance
Peak use is approximately 1700 vehicles ADT/3500 on weekend
Cliff Drive recently reverted to gravel surface because of condition and cost
County-wide millage for local roads is \$409,000
Recent uses include Mohawk streets, Bete Gris Rd, north-south Copper Harbor streets
Has seen an increase in calls to maintain seasonal roads
Has seen an increase in calls to take over private roads (new residents)
Traffic counts available from MDOT online
Ben Carrigan, MDOT 906-280-6573
Road Commission has a 5 year plan
Highline Fiber will be installing fiber optic in ROW in 2026-27
Non-motorized: Rd Commission required to spend 10% on non-motorized. They comply by
paving 22-24 feet for more paved shoulders

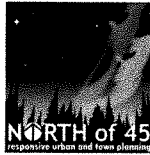
9-23-25

Katy Beleck, Mike McMahon, Keweenaw ATV Club

Have worked 30 years to get the trail system present today
Goal-connect all businesses
DNR sanctioned trail system
Collaborate with KORC
Permanent trail system is goal-has been achieved
Working on Burma-Aetna Trail Loop
High Rock trail/road maintained by ATV funds
Have 28 private trail easements
DNR contact – Emily Clegg 906-251-1847

9-23-25

Jeff Ratcliffe, Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance
South part of the County is part of the “Calumet area technology corridor”
Mohawk Technology (expanding) and Nouvokis companies
Challenges to industry and manufacturing
Distance
Low volume/high value products
Leaders must be attracted to the area
Remote workers are a growing segment of employment
Broadband is critical for this
Recommends maintaining some land for manufacturing
CAFS/Open Skies site has some potential
Mount Bohemia is important for tourism
Planning Commission has representation of Heartlands Advisory Group
Heartland Community Benefit Lands has \$50k for a study of sites



9-23-25

Copper Harbor Trails Club - Adam Yeoman

Built and maintains 65 mi of trails

- Maintain some hiking trails in Copper Harbor area

Strain on first responders

- Bike patrollers

- Provide support for first responders

- Club has equipment

Trail Counters

East Bluff trail development has reduced congestion in Copper Harbor

Community connection trails

- In the club's master plan

New ski trails east of Copper Harbor

- Open to all users

- 6'wide

9-24-25

Gina Nicholas, KORC and various conservancies

Zoning must reflect protected lands

Housing is needed in the County

- For employees

- Single family

- Multi-family

- Good site east of Lake Manganese

Forest legacy lands will be most restrictive

9-24-25

South Shore Association, Jim Valsa, with a group of concerned citizens from Lac La Belle area

SSA is a voice for where tax \$ go

4 meetings/year

LLB fish boil fundraiser

Kids fishing

Mid-summer event – bonfire

Promoting recycling

LLB parks – Union Park in the Mendota plat area

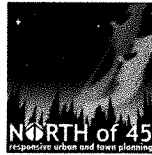
Master Plan

- There's no control over STRs

- Should be a license/fee

- Septic inspection

Mount Bohemia – winter parking on Bete Gris Rd



Conservancy lands

- Amount of land
- Emergency access
- Blocked roads

Housing

- Build by Mohawk
- Cliff Drive

Electric service in south shore/LLB area is sketchy, needs upgrade
EV charging

10/8/25

Keweenaw County Sheriff, Curt Pennala, Tanya Mattila

In the last 3 years-

- 27% increase in 911 calls

 - Calls for service

 - 2021 =1395

 - 2025 =1777

 - not tracking local calls at this time, only 911 calls

- 50% increase in Search & Rescue

 - 15 so far in 2025

 - Sheriff is first response

First Responders

- Licensed by Sheriff county-wide

STRs have expanded the # of people in the County

Complaints about Mount Bohemia parking on Bete Gris Rd

Staffing

- 6 FT deputies

- 1 temp (p/t trail patrol

- Transporting prisoners to court, jail, medical, etc strains staffing

- Unable to patrol remote sites

- Need better recreational presence

- Ideal staffing

 - 8 FT road patrol

 - 2 FT recreational

Metrics

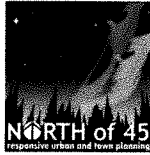
- Mental health related crimes

- Tourist related calls – 50%

Search and rescue

- 30 volunteers

- based in Allouez



Housing (affordable) is needed

Staff has housing issues

Volunteers: 120 in Keweenaw County

EMS

Firefighters

Search & Rescue

New Emergency Services Building

Shared with the Road Commission

Sheriff tries to use social media to inform citizens

County Administrator is needed to write grants

Master Plan Community Input Summaries

Process & Survey Overview

- 414 survey responses (all online); all property owners in county were mailed a postcard, outreach included media and web.
- Demographics: ~45% live full-time, 54% own property, high participation from Allouez (40%) and Grant Township (31%), respondents mostly over 40, few children.
- Main reasons for living in Keweenaw: proximity to natural resources, community connection; many retirees and remote workers.
- Length of residence: nearly half over 20 years; most feel county is either unchanged or more desirable.
- Most not planning to move, though some are interested in relocating to the county.

Community Priorities & Concerns

- Top priorities: preserving rural/scenic character, balancing tourism and preservation, historic preservation, improving walkability/trails.
- Economic development: 45% support some industrial zone expansion; concern over tax base as more land becomes protected.
- Housing: Strong support for rehabilitating existing homes, new single-family and workforce housing; challenges include lack of land and infrastructure, limited access to water/sewer, no active land bank, limited tax incentive use for affordable housing.
- Short-term rentals: Mixed opinions on further regulation, specific concerns include septic standards, occupancy, and cap on rental numbers.
- General challenges: Rising tourism, short-term rentals, fire volunteer recruitment, job creation, affordable housing, expanding tax base.
- Seasonal/community issues: Snow removal challenges, need for indoor/fitness recreation (28%-36% highlight lack), social isolation (especially elderly), limited access to healthy foods.

Infrastructure & Technology

- Broadband/fiber improvements underway (Highline to lay cable 2026-2027); service improvements linked to remote worker growth and county connection.

Observed Changes

- Increased year-round visitation, vehicular traffic, and expanded access to remote areas.
- Mixed impact perceptions: Neutral for business development; negative for increased seasonal traffic.
- High community awareness of Nature Conservancy Heartlands project, mixed awareness on activity updates.

Workshop & Stakeholder Summaries

Public Workshops

- Open house events: 93 participants total, good turnout in some (Allouez, Eagle Harbor), low in Grant; general desire for more local-focused planning, scenic preservation, and walkability.

Township highlights

- Eagle Harbor: Interest in off-grid housing, zoning inflexibility.
- Sherman: Desire for more business zoning flexibility.
- Allouez: Gateway community identity, concern over excessive seaplane noise, focus on access management (shared driveways).
- Grant: Short-term rental regulation, Copper Harbor congestion/streetscape planning.
- Houghton: Low full-time residency, need for combining township operations, call for form-based code for preserving community appearance.

Key Stakeholder Discussions

- Nature Conservancy (Julia Peterson): Arms-length from planning; provided data on protected lands.
- Visitor Bureau (Brad Barnett): Room assessment explained; most lodging in Houghton County; destination grants provided; employer recruitment difficult; possible new STR legislation; major revenues linked to room rates not volume.
- Historical Society (Laura Bondi): Large operation, tourism at capacity, challenge in volunteer recruitment, strong cultural/historic preservation focus, need for inventory of significant sites.
- Road Commission (Greg Kingstrom): Brockway Mountain repaving requires \$9 million; funding challenges; must spend 10% on non-motorized improvements; increased seasonal road maintenance requests.
- ATV Club (Katy Beleck, Mike McMahon): All trail easements secured; trail maintenance ongoing, including High Rock Trail.
- Economic Development Alliance (Jeff Ratcliffe): Industrial lands should be maintained; old Air Force Station seen as potential; remote worker and tech opportunities; importance of Mount Bohemia for tourism; identified infrastructure needs.
- Copper Harbor Trails Club (Adam Yeoman): Trails club manages 65 miles; plans for ski trails; congestion relief from East Bluff development; desire for more bike patrollers; impacts on first responders.
- South Shore Association (Jim Valsa and additional members): Short-term rental regulation, parking, conservancy land impacts, challenges with blocked roads and electric service noted.
- Sheriff Department: (Curt Pennala and Tonya Mattila) 27% increase in 911 calls in three years, 50% increase in search/rescue calls (15 YTD); complaints about STR impacts; affordable housing needed for staff; new emergency services building planned.