

**Keweenaw County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2026 at 4:00 PM**

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order at 4:00 PM by Chair Simila

Roll Call:

Don Simila, Bob Pokorski, John Parsons, Steve Siirra, Harvey Desnick, Bob DeMarois/ Present
Margaret Kirby / Excused absence

Quorum: 6 members present and meeting was properly posted.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda. M/Pokorski S/Demarois Unanimously approved

Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2026 special meeting (Master Plan Workshop) as presented. M/Parsons S/Pokorski Unanimously approved

Correspondence: No correspondence received for distribution.

Public Comment: No public comments received.

Zoning Administrator's Report: Hockings

Permit Activity: Six permits submitted by end of March (year-to-date). One Category 3 landfill application for the Buffalo Reef project was denied as premature by EGLE. One major site plan is pending; others were standard residential.

Childcare Facilities Update: New state rules allow private childcare facilities by right in all zoning districts, requiring a zoning ordinance update, with guidance materials under review and planned integration into upcoming master plan discussions. A childcare best practices guide was received for review and will be forwarded to commission members by staff.

Citizen Planner Training: A free, self-paced online program through MSU Extension is available and exceeds required educational hours. Commissioners expressed interest in participating

Board of Commissioners Report: Demarois

A regional recycling drop-off site will launch in Laurium to serve surrounding communities without curbside pickup, supported by a \$28,000 EGLE grant (allocated between education and operations) and potential Public Act 138 funding, though long-term sustainability, governance coordination, and transport logistics remain unresolved. Meanwhile, changes in waste handling, including discontinuing glass recycling, exploring reuse in road construction, and addressing limited landfill capacity (with costly expansion). This underscores the need for a cohesive, countywide waste management strategy.

ZBA Liaison Report: Desnick

No recent ZBA meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for May 4th. Meetings occur quarterly or as needed.

New Business: Short-Term Rental (STR) Ordinance Development (Article XVII)

The proposed Article XVII, outlining regulations for annual STR permits, was read aloud section by section and discussed by the commission. Key areas of discussion included:

- The legal basis for county authority to regulate STRs and implement annual permits.
- Specific permit requirements, including septic system capacity verification and off-street parking standards.
- The proposed annual permit fee structure and its non-transferability.
- Enforcement mechanisms and the appeals process.
- The legality and implications of a proposed six-month transition period for existing STRs, particularly regarding the elimination of grandfathered status.
- The uniform application of regulations across all zoning districts and the potential for density limits set by the County Board.

A motion to forward the presented redlined version of Article XVII to the Keweenaw County attorneys Chuck Miller and Steve Tinti for expedited legal review was made. Specific request was for legal review to be completed within 90 days. M/Pokorski S/Parsons Unanimously approved

Old Business:

Bylaws Subcommittee Report: Simila & Demarois

Revised bylaws draft sent to legal for review; feedback is awaited. No public hearing is required for bylaws. Final adoption will occur after legal approval.

Master Plan Subcommittee Report: Pokorski & Simila:

First-quarter report to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is in progress, with data collection ongoing. A meeting is scheduled for April 15 with the county treasurer and board chair, with submission due by the end of April. A joint meeting was held with Planning Consultant Pat Coleman focused on future land use, particularly in Allouez and Grant Townships. The April 13 meeting will now focus solely on future land use, delaying the master plan timeline by one month. The plan remains on track for completion by year-end.

Public Comments: None

Final Comments from the Commission: Commissioners expressed appreciation for the productive discussion and acknowledged the complexity of the ongoing work by all committees. The next session is a master plan workshop on April 13, 2026, at 4:00 PM with guest Pat Coleman. Next regular meeting scheduled for April 27, 2026 at 4:00PM.

Motion to adjourn at 5:39PM M/Pokorski S/Demarois Unanimously approved

Recording Secretary, Susan Hockings: _____

Planning Commission Secretary, Margaret Kirby: _____