

KEWEENAW COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Meeting
Master Plan Workshop Minutes
April 13, 2026 at 4:00pm

Roll Call:

Don Simila /present	Steven Siira / present
Bob Pokorski / present	Harvey Desnick / present
John Parsons / present	Bob DeMarois / excused absence
Margaret Kirby / excused absence	Susan Hockings, ZA / present

A quorum of five was present and the meeting was properly posted
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Approve Agenda: M/ Pokorski S/Siira Unanimously approved

Approve Minutes of March 30, 2026 with spelling correction:
M/ Desnick S/Siira Unanimously approved as corrected

Public Comments:

- Cassie Abrams from EGLE: Buffalo Reef Stamp Sand Storage Proposal highlighted copper stamp sand pollution affecting Lake Superior's shoreline from Gay to Grand Traverse Harbor, smothering vital fish spawning reefs. A permanent lined landfill is proposed for stamp sand storage until beneficial reuse is found. The facility would require zoning inclusion in Keweenaw County's master plan.
- Carolyn St. Cyr from EGLE detailed: - 14 million cubic yards of stamp sand exist. - Facility: Type III engineered landfill (composite liner, leachate system, 110 of 640 acres used, 4:1 slope). – Requested zoning change to Agricultural Districts with special permission, as siting is prohibited in residential areas under current waste plan. - Nine-phase, long-term project; Phase 1 (14 acres) could take ~25 years at current dredge rate. - Goal: Remediate stamp sand back to original high water mark.
- Del Rajala from Mohawk raised concerns: - Late notification of a project with \$2.1 billion estimated federal cost. - Lack of advertised public meetings. - Questions about leachate discharge, future waste acceptance, ownership, and expansion. - Why alternatives (capping in place, offshore barge, mine return) were not chosen. - Submitted written questions to the board which are attached to these minutes. (see attached)
- John Kern responded that the project is long-standing, publicly documented via RIFS, and encouraged public review. Supported master plan inclusion.
- EGLE staff confirmed: hydrogeologic and environmental assessments complete; leachate treated to Michigan Type II/III standards; multiple alternatives evaluated.
- Vice chair noted that a presentation of the Buffalo Reef project is not on official agenda; commissioners noted they were informed only a month prior. Chair affirmed public comment welcome, with full deliberation at a future formal meeting.

Guests: Pat Coleman, North of 45LLC presented future land use maps and led discussion concerning Keweenaw Counties future Land Use.

Key discussion points included:

- Future Land Use Map: A non-regulatory guide for aspirational development, noting limited change in protected areas and developed shorelines.
- Allouez Township Land Update: American Songbird Bird Conservancy acquired large timberlands, requiring a map update.

- Development & Housing Challenges: High demand, scarce land, and agricultural zoning (5-acre minimum) limit housing options, contributing to an aging population and difficulty retaining young families.
- Proposed Housing Strategies: Allow duplexes by right, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), rezone agricultural land near towns, prioritize infill in areas with utilities, and redevelop blighted lots via the Brownfield Authority. Allow township supervisor expressed interest in changes to allow more multifamily housing options and manufacturing districts within the township.
- Economic Development: Potential for high-tech growth (Michigan Tech's Smart Zone) and commercial expansion in areas like Mohawk, supported by ongoing broadband infrastructure projects.
- Local Insights: Engaging entrepreneurs for zoning input, addressing workforce housing needs (especially in the Calumet-Mohawk corridor), and considering form-based codes for historic areas like Eagle River.
- Copper Harbor/Grant Township: Extreme land scarcity and a severe housing crisis impacting year-round services; discussions around East Bluff expansion and identifying community benefit properties for seasonal workforce housing and more affordable housing options for year round residents.
- Policy Recommendations: Aligning the master plan with recreational demand, promoting inland development for affordable homesteads, and revising zoning for more flexible housing types.
- Sherman Township/Gay Stamp Sands: Discussion on zoning and infrastructure in Gay and the EGLE proposal for stamp sand relocation, with calls for direct presentations to Sherman Township and Keweenaw residents.

Public Comments:

- Gina Nicholas highlighted several concerns regarding the stamp sand relocation project, noting that despite two decades of discussion, meetings were held outside of Keweenaw County. She urged project representatives like Jay Parent to present directly to local residents, expressing concern over the proposed 200 acre landfill and associated trucking.

Planning Commission Comments: Thanked the consultant for his presentation, the public for their participation, and announced next meeting will be a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on April 27, 2026 at 4:00pm

Motion to adjourn at 5:42pm: M/Desnick S/Siira Motion carried

Recording Secretary: Susan M Hockings _____

Planning Commission Secretary: Margaret Kirby _____

Attachment: Submitted written comment from Del Rajala

Questions regarding proposed landfill site for Stamp Sand

- Why is Keweenaw County just now finding out about this? How many years has it been in the planning stage? With a estimated \$2.1 Billion Dollar price tag it appears more is in question than just simply moving sand.
- Were there any advertised meetings in Keweenaw County to allow any public comment or questions? It seems that decisions driving this project were made by government agencies only.
- What was the cost, using State of Michigan Tax money, spent on this project development?
- Is the leachate, run off, from the landfill going to be collected and treated? Where will it be disposed/discharged? Will it be brought back to the shoreline as a condensed harmful material, diluted with lake water and discharged back into the lake?
- If constructed, what will prevent this from becoming a landfill that accepts other waste, household waste, construction waste, hazardous waste in the future?
- Will this landfill be expanded in the future? Who will own the landfill? Who will operate it? I've never heard of the state building, owning or operating a landfill before. And if the state doesn't own it, that means it will be privatized opening concerns for what else the landfill will accept in the future besides just stamp sand.
- Why has it not been considered to simply push back, which was previously recommended, and cap the sand in Gay instead of moving it?
- Why was simply barging the stamp sand offshore to the depths of Lake Superior, or returning the material back into the mine shafts in which they were removed considered? If it was who's decision was it not to do this this and why?