

KEWEENAW COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 31, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Don Simila called the Regular Meeting of the Keweenaw County Planning Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. at the Keweenaw County Courthouse, Eagle River, Michigan.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present

- Don Simila, Chair
- Bob Pokorski, Vice Chair
- Margaret Kirby, Secretary
- Harvey Desnick, ZBA Liaison
- John Parsons
- Steven Siira
- Bob DeMarois, BOC Liaison (Ex-Officio)

Staff: Susan M. Hockings, Zoning Administrator, present.

A quorum was declared present and the meeting was properly posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Planning Commission and those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Pokorski, seconded by Kirby, and unanimously approved.

Motion to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2026 regular meeting as presented was made by Parsons, seconded by Pokorski, and unanimously approved.

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2026 special meeting, as amended by Desnick to reflect that discussion included the question of the County's authority to enact and enforce an annual short-term rental permitting/licensing program, was made by Pokorski and seconded by Desnick, and unanimously approved.

Correspondence: none.

ZA Report: none.

BOC Report: Nothing new since the previous meeting.

ZBA Report: No meeting; nothing to report.

New Business

Proposed Article 17 Short-Term Rental Text Amendment Addendum: The Zoning Administrator explained that the addendum clarifies the transition from existing short-term rental permits to the proposed annual permit system. Existing permit holders would have a six-month transition period; upon issuance of a new annual permit, the prior permit would no longer remain in effect. The proposed amendment is scheduled for public hearing on October 5, 2026. Motion to approve the addendum for inclusion with the proposed text amendment and public hearing materials was made by Kirby, seconded by Parsons. Motion carried with one no vote from Desnick.

Zoning Department Fee Schedule Recommendation: The subcommittee reported that it met with the County Treasurer and reviewed the County's actual costs associated with zoning applications, permits, site visits, public hearings, staff time, publication, and related administrative expenses. The proposed fee schedule includes: zoning permit application \$75; each site visit \$100; six-month extension \$40; public hearing deposit \$1,100; conditional use application \$150; special land use \$300 plus public hearing deposit; variance/appeal \$150 plus public hearing deposit; major site plan review \$500; zoning text amendment \$150 plus public hearing deposit; map rezoning \$150 plus public hearing deposit; and PUD/condominium application and review \$1,200 plus public hearing deposit. Public hearing deposits are refundable if no hearing is published and held; once notice is published, the hearing fee is retained. Motion to recommend the proposed fee schedule to the Board of Commissioners was made by Pokorski, supported by DeMarois, and unanimously carried.

Guest Presentation

Robert Hazen gave a presentation on the Indigenous history and archaeological heritage of Keweenaw County and its relationship to the County Master Plan. Hazen discussed Anishinaabe history, early copper mining and working, treaties, known archaeological sites in the Keweenaw, and the vulnerability of cultural resources to looting, erosion, and development. He noted Master Plan survey support for protection of rural, scenic, historic, and environmental resources and suggested planning and zoning strategies including clear development guidelines near sensitive heritage areas, sustainable tourism and public education, and stronger partnerships with tribal authorities. Discussion followed regarding archaeological-site protections, private property, Indigenous burial sites, and procedures when human remains are inadvertently discovered.

Public Comment

Public comments were heard from Kathy McEvers, John Kern, Anita Campbell, and Deborah Shlonzek. Comments concerned the proposed short-term rental fee structure and whether fees should vary by rental occupancy; the County's authority to establish an annual short-term rental fee; County legal advice and legal expenses; and confirmation that the proposed short-term rental amendment addendum would be posted for public review before the October 5, 2026 public hearing.

Final Comments

Commission members thanked Robert Hazen for his presentation and participation.

Next meeting of the Planning Commission September 28, 2026 at 4:00pm for a Public Hearing on the Master Plan followed by the regular meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Pokorski and seconded by Kirby, and unanimously carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Susan M Hockings, Recording Secretary: _____

Margaret Kirby, PC Secretary: _____