KEWEENAW COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2026 | 4:00 P.M.
Keweenaw County Courthouse, Eagle River, Michigan

Members Present: Don Simila, John Parsons, Harvey Desnick, Bob Pokorski, Steve Siira
Members Absent: Margaret Kirby (excused), Bob DeMarois (excused)
Staff Present: Susan M. Hockings, Zoning Administrator

Call to Order
The regular meeting of the Keweenaw County Planning Commission was called to order at 4:00 P.M. A quorum of 5 was established.
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda
A motion was made by Parson and second by Pokorski to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
The Commission reviewed the September 28, 2026 meeting minutes.
Bob Pokorski identified an error in the identification of the motion maker and seconder for a motion to table the STR Ordinance Amendment. The minutes were to be corrected to reflect that Bob Pokorski made the motion and Harvey Desnick seconded it.
A motion was made and seconded to approve the September 28, 2026 minutes as corrected.
Motion carried unanimously.

Correspondence
The Commission received a letter of resignation from Margaret Kirby, citing personal reasons.
Members discussed the vacancy and the appointment process. The Zoning Administrator provided copies of four previously submitted applications from Doug Dawson, Mary Hunt, Steve Klein, and Eric Campbell.
The Commission discussed township representation and expressed a preference for appointing a qualified year-round resident from a township not currently represented, particularly Houghton or Sherman Township.
The Commission agreed that the Zoning Administrator would communicate these preferences to the Board of Commissioners. No formal motion was made.

Zoning Administrator Report
Zoning Administrator Hockings reported that more than 70 zoning permits had been issued to date during 2026, compared with 80 permits issued during all of 2025.
She also reported that she was handling building, electrical, mechanical, and other construction-related permits and had compiled permit activity figures through the beginning of October.

Board of Commissioners Report
No report was presented.
Zoning Board of Appeals Report
No ZBA activity was reported.

New Business
Application from the Board of Commissioners for a text amendment to repeal the Keweenaw County Zoning Ordinance
The Commission received and reviewed an application submitted by the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners requesting a text amendment to repeal the Keweenaw County Zoning Ordinance, with a proposed effective date of October 5, 2027.

Zoning Administrator Hockings reviewed the procedures for processing the proposed repeal, including review of the application, supporting documentation, staff findings, a public hearing, and a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.
Members discussed the significance of the proposed repeal, its relationship to the recently adopted County Master Plan, and the need for adequate supporting documentation before proceeding.
Concerns were raised regarding the financial and insurance-related statements contained in the application.
Members requested supporting information, including financial records and documentation concerning insurance costs and liability.
Members also identified that the application did not include the specific proposed ordinance amendment language.

First Motion
A motion was made by Desnick second by Pokorski to receive the proposed zoning repeal application, request supporting records or clarification, and reserve final findings and recommendations until after a public hearing and review of the record.
Following discussion, the **motion failed** by a vote of 1 Yay – 4 Nay.
Second Motion
Pokorski moved to reject the application as incomplete* because it did not include the proposed text necessary to repeal the ordinance. Second by Desnick.
During discussion, the Commission identified the following deficiencies and requested information:

- The application was not dated.
- The specific proposed ordinance repeal language was not provided.
- Supporting financial information was needed to substantiate statements regarding the County's financial burden.
- Documentation or testimony concerning insurance and underwriting concerns was requested.

*The Commission voted to reject the application as incomplete. The minutes should not suggest that the Commission voted against repeal itself. Members emphasized the importance of following the required procedures and ensuring that the proposed repeal is supported by a complete public record.
Motion carried unanimously.
The Commission discussed allowing members additional time to review the application and submit questions directly to the Zoning Administrator. Staff would compile the questions and available answers for further discussion at the December 14, 2026 meeting.
No public hearing date was established but may be scheduled after review and discussion at the next regular meeting.

Township Planning and Zoning
The Commission discussed the potential transition from countywide zoning to individual township or joint township zoning.
It was reported that Grant Township had appointed a committee to review its options for establishing township zoning or participating in joint planning and zoning.
Members discussed the resources and administrative responsibilities that would be required for townships to establish planning commissions and zoning programs.
The Zoning Administrator reported that information outlining the necessary steps had been provided to the townships.
The Commission expressed support for assisting townships with information and guidance upon request, while recognizing that decisions regarding local zoning would remain with the individual townships.
No formal action was taken.

Old Business
Keweenaw County Master Plan
The Commission reviewed the final corrected version of the Keweenaw County Master Plan adopted in September 2026.

It was reported that the requested corrections had been completed, including map corrections, photo credits, and editorial revisions.
The corrected version would be posted on the County website as the adopted Master Plan, and forwarded to the Board of Commissioners.
The final project report and invoice would be submitted through the appropriate County and grant reimbursement process.
No further action was required.

Proposed Short-Term Rental Ordinance Text Amendment
The Commission resumed discussion of the proposed Short-Term Rental Ordinance text amendment, which had been tabled at the previous meeting.
Members discussed whether to proceed with a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners while the proposed repeal of countywide zoning was pending.
Some members expressed concern about proceeding with an ordinance amendment during the repeal process. Others noted that the County Zoning Ordinance remained in effect and that the Commission had already completed substantial work on the proposed amendment, including a public hearing.
A motion was made by Parsons and seconded by Simila to recommend that the Board of Commissioners adopt the proposed Short-Term Rental Ordinance text amendment as developed by the Planning Commission.
A roll-call vote was taken:

Member	Vote
John Parsons	Yes
Harvey Desnick	No
Steve Siira	Yes*
Bob Pokorski	No
Don Simila	Yes

Motion carried, 3–2. The proposed amendment will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for consideration.
*Steve Siira initially indicated that he wished to abstain because the motion was unclear. After the motion was restated, Siira voted Yes, and the meeting record reports three affirmative and two negative votes.

Public Comment
Debra Shelonzek addressed the Commission regarding accountability, zoning enforcement, short-term rental regulation, and the conduct of County officials. She expressed concerns about tourism, taxation, the Master Plan, and the proposed repeal of countywide zoning.
Mary Hunt, a resident of Houghton Township, spoke about her application for appointment to the Planning Commission. She described her experience in residential development, community economic development, and chamber of commerce leadership and expressed her continued interest in serving.
Greg Shelonzek supported the appointment of a Planning Commission member from an underrepresented township, noting the value of broader geographic representation.
Lil Ryckman asked whether the County considers the concentration or density of short-term rentals when reviewing applications and where information regarding those standards could be found. The Commission discussed the current ordinance and the Board of Commissioners' authority to establish permit limits through future amendments.
No further public comments were received.

Adjournment
A motion was made by Desnick, second by Siira, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at **5:07 P.M.**