

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING
September 14, 2026

The special meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners held on September 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at Horizons School, Mohawk, MI, opened with the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioners present: Robert DeMarois, Randy Eckloff, Mike LaMotte and Don Piche. Absent: Del Rajala

The special meeting was posted on the bulletin board outside of the Courthouse and on the Website.

Motion by LaMotte supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

The meeting was held to hear the public's opinion on possibly eliminating Keweenaw County Zoning.

After hearing public comments, most people were in favor of keeping zoning. There were many concerns voiced about not having enough money to fund zoning and/or a new deputy for the Sheriff's office and feel that both are essential. There were also concerns about Data Centers coming into the area if the County ceased zoning. People want to keep zoning to preserve the natural beauty of the Keweenaw and to keep their own property safe from development of big tech and data centers etc.

Other public comments were not in favor of zoning. They would like to end countywide zoning completely.

Many possible solutions were suggested, such as the possibility of turning zoning over to each Township, pay a consultant as you go, make the zoning a part-time position and work with Townships, vote on a higher millage, increase costs of use permits for STR's and tap into resources from tourism. Suggestions were also made to scale back the zoning ordinance because it is too restrictive.

Erik Campbell and Anita Campbell requested that their public comment be added to the record.

There being no further business motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff to adjourn at 7:37 p.m. Meeting adjourned sine die.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Roxanne Billing, Deputy Clerk

Good evening, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Anita Campbell, and our family has owned a camp in Lac La Belle for the past 38 years.

I am here tonight because I believe zoning is important to the future of Keweenaw County - but I also believe we should look carefully at where zoning decisions are best made.

Keweenaw County is a very large and geographically diverse county, especially considering our small population. Keweenaw ranks #20 among Michigan's 83 counties in land area. Our five townships are spread across a tremendous area, and each has developed its own character, challenges and land-use needs.

What is appropriate for one township may not be appropriate for another. That is why I believe partial township zoning deserves serious consideration. Sadly, Keweenaw County is the only county in Michigan that does not have township zoning. (with the exception of Eagle Harbor Twp.

At the same time, I recognize that the administration of county zoning has lost the confidence of some residents in our communities. For one example, when a county resident pays a \$500 fee to seek a Zoning Board of Appeals hearing and is told two weeks later there would be no hearing because they have no standing - without receiving their \$500 back - it raises legitimate concerns about how that legal process is being administered.

If county-wide zoning has become too costly or has lost public confidence, I believe we should look at changing the structure rather than abandoning zoning.

Perhaps we should look at a combination model, like retaining the administration at the county level (issuing permits, etc. with a part-time Administrator whose salary is shared by the Townships) and continue having a joint Planning Commission with representatives from each township. When a zoning amendment is suggested, instead of having the County Board of Commissioners make a final decision, allow the Township legislative bodies to make a decision and accept or reject what works best for their Township within their borders.

Many residents have spent years attending meetings, serving on commissions and helping create our Master Plan & Zoning Ordinances. We should not discard all that work simply because administering the current system has become difficult of expensive.

Once zoning is gone, it may be very hard to put those protections back in place.

*Thank you, Please add my comments to the record.
Anita Campbell pdalcampb@gmail.com*

Public hearing being held to discuss and inform the residents of Keweenaw County the process to potentially cease Keweenaw County Zoning – September, 14 2026

Good evening Commissioners,

My name is Erik Campbell and I live at 6341 Sand Point Rd Lac La Belle Keweenaw County.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment tonight.

I would like to state that I support a fully staffed Sheriff's Office to ensure the continued safety of Keweenaw County residents and the deputies. I also support zoning but am open to ways we can improve how it is being administered and whether that is a part-time position or at the township level.

In my view, the issue is not whether Keweenaw County should get rid of zoning. The issue is whether we are receiving responsible, consistent, and fiscally accountable zoning administration.

The County is telling residents that it does not have the money to fund a Sheriff's deputy position because of budget constraints. At the same time, county resources have been consumed by aggressive zoning decisions, costly zoning litigation resulting from conflicts with residents, and zoning decisions that are adversarial and not necessarily aligned with Keweenaw County priorities.

If kept at the county level, perhaps a **part-time** Zoning Administrator position with clearly defined priorities of work would establish reasonable limits on what the administrator is expected and authorized to undertake, while also preserving enough budget for the Sheriff's office.

The Board of Commissioners could establish specific zoning priorities and require that ongoing and costly litigation, new amendments, enforcement efforts, or expenditures outside those priorities are canceled or can proceed.

This would provide an important level of fiscal control. Instead of having an open-ended zoning administrator position with the ability to continually expand the scope of zoning activities—and potentially generate additional administrative, legal, and consulting expenses—the County would establish a defined workload and budget and operate within those limits.

I respectfully request to preserve reasonable zoning by:

1. Making the position part time
2. Demanding improved administration
3. Establish meaningful oversight and a prioritized workload if kept at the county level
4. Explore township level zoning funded by the township

A part-time zoning with strict oversight **OR** township level zoning could be mutually agreeable compromise that would serve residents and most importantly prioritize budget to maintain County public safety.

Please add this comment to the minutes of this meeting

Thank you.

Erik Campbell
