

Keweenaw County Planning & Zoning

Public Hearing: August 25, 2025

County Board of Commissioners September 17, 2025

STAFF PLANNING REPORT

Rezoning

Case 001-25 A request to rezone from M (Manufacturing) and B (Business) to

AG (Agriculture)

Location 3696 US41, Mohawk, MI 49950

Parcel 42-101-27-201-010

Applicant Russ Bjorn represented by Eric Bjorn

Existing Conditions

Zoning	Land Use	Property Size
M & B	Vacant	40acres

Site Context

	North	East	Southeast	South	Southwest	West
Existing Zoning	M & B	M & B	M & AG	M & AG	M & B & AG	RRB
Land Use	Vacant	Storage Building &	Residential	Residential & AG	Residential, Commercial	Residential
		Mine Rock Pile			Storage, Business	

Future Land Use

Keweenaw County's Future Land Use Map shows this property is currently zoned Manufacturing and Business which is inconsistent within the immediate area and with the request.

Transportation

Streets with access	Classification	Right-of-way width
US 41 & M26	State & Federal Highway	100 feet

STAFF ANALYSIS

CONSISTENT WITH POLICIES OF THE KEWEENAW COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The request is consistent with the comprehensive plan, "Blue Print For Tomorrow", adopted February 2017, specifically in the area of future growth and development which lists 5 policies to "Retain the character of Keweenaw County by ensuring orderly future growth and development consistent with local community values."

Policy 1-1. Through land use regulation ensure new developments function as extensions of existing development patterns including: Copper Harbor, Lac La Belle, Gay, and Eagle River as extended vacation, seasonal, and permanent residential communities; Allouez, Ahmeek, Mohawk, Fulton, each as a focus for permanent residential/business development; and Copper Harbor and Lac La Belle as tourist? oriented business/residential communities. Policy 1-2. Continue levels of residential use based on compatibility, parcel size, maximum density, and availability of existing and proposed sewer and water systems, and provide areas in the County for large lot residential development and varied housing opportunities. Policy 1-3. Encourage industrial, commercial and business development that is appropriate to the area based on compatibility with surrounding uses, and availability of high speed internet, energy, sewer and water systems, and accessibility.

Policy 1-4. Allow home-based businesses as a viable component of the local economy, but carefully review proposals for impacts on adjoining properties (i.e. traffic, parking, lighting), as well as the overall character of the areas in which they would locate. Place strict controls on conversion of properties to permanent commercial uses.

Policy 1-5. Minimize removal or disruption of historical structures, whether or not listed on the state and federal register of historic places, and preserve architectural character of communities through design regulations with strict controls in historical and sensitive areas of the County.

The Future Land Use Plan for Agricultural zoning states:

"AGRICULTURAL (AG) The AG use is designed to provide for continuation of the limited agricultural activities in the County. These areas are designed to protect those areas suitable for agricultural pursuits and to encourage "hobby" farms within the County. Open space development options are encouraged in order to protect the character of the County. Agricultural lands have been identified primarily on inland properties of Allouez Township where they are compatible with the surrounding uses."

THE SUITABILITY OF THE PROPERTY FOR USES TO WHICH IT HAS BEEN RESTRICTED

The current zoning is:

BUSINESS (B1) The B-1 use is established to provide areas for commercial establishments that offer a wide range of goods and services. Uses such as retail and wholesale activities; consumer

services; professional, business and government offices; and other compatible uses should be directed to these areas. The business category encourages a mix of uses primarily focused along US 41 from Allouez to Mohawk.

LIGHT MANUFACTURING (M1) The M-1 use is established to provide areas for light, industrial, office and administrative uses having few, if any, adverse effects on neighboring properties. The M-1 use has been identified for areas along US 41 and in Mohawk where compatible with the surrounding property. Because of the close proximity to residential homes, high standards of protection of the human environment are expected in these areas.

GENERAL MANUFACTURING (M2) The M-2 use is established to provide areas in which manufacturing and related commercial operations are the principal use of the land. Such uses have some adverse effects on surrounding properties and are not compatible with residential and retail uses. The former Louisiana Pacific Sawmill site has been identified for this use due to its accessible location along US 41 and its compatibility with surrounding uses of agriculture and timber resources. Delaware should also be considered for light or general manufacturing.

However, the properties surrounding this parcel are being used for residential and recreational use as well as extraction. The nearest commercial use (commercial storage units) is to the southwest as you come into Mohawk proper. To the north, the old sawmill mentioned above is no longer in use, and there haven't been any new manufacturing or businesses heading north out of town. The land use remains primarily timber resources and agricultural.

A manufacturing district does not allow for family homes or agriculture/horticulture, but the land and the area are well suited for those purposes. Even though the area is zoned manufacturing, there has not been any growth in manufacturing or business north of Mohawk, when what is being requested (and needed) in the area is more families and housing.

THE EXTENT THAT THE ZONING CHANGE WILL DETRIMENTALLY AFFECT NEARBY PROPERTY

The proposed zoning change will have minimal impact on nearby properties. This is vacant property where no development has occurred, and the proposed land use of a single family dwelling with a hobby farm is compatible with the surrounding uses and nearby AG zoning. Section 27 is currently divided into five zones which include Manufacturing, Business, Residential, Agriculture, and a small section of Conservation Environmental Protection. Despite current zoning, the adjoining properties with this parcel are used for residential, recreational, and extraction purposes.

DISCUSSION

A change in zoning to AG would allow Russ Bjorn and his family those uses and activities already offered in the area.

The AG (agricultural district) allows for the following uses by right: Single family homes, animal hospitals, animal shelters, commercial kennels, veterinary services, educational institutions, forest management (not sawmills), and commercial agriculture or horticulture (by right in all districts).

Currently this is vacant property, and the only development proposed with this request is a single family dwelling with the possibility of a hobby farm, and a future split of the 40 acre parcel to allow for another single family residence.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This request ensures the needs of the landowner are met. It is consistent with the land use already in the area, and a family home with hobby farm on 40 acres has little impact on the neighboring properties. The current manufacturing district does not allow single family residency. Staff did not received any objections to the proposed zoning change from neighboring property owners (one adjoining property owner inquired if his property could be changed to AG as well) or from Allouez Township. Therefore, once the Planning Commission completes the findings of fact at the upcoming Public Hearing, staff would support this rezoning change from M & B to AG.

ATTACHMENTS

Application

Published, Posted, and Mailed Notices

Maps



ZONING AMENDMENT APPLICATION

Application fee \$500.00

ALL INFORMATION IS REQUIRED

Date: 06/09/2025	Parcel ID: 42-101-27-201-010		
Applicant Name: Russ Bjorn	Owner Name: Russ & Leah Bjorn		
Address: 1282 Highland Dr Apt 4	Address: 1282 Highland Dr Apt 4		
City/State/Zip: Blackfoot, Idaho 83221	City/State/Zip: Blackfoot, Idaho 83221		
Phone: (906)369-5041	Phone: (906)369-5041		
Email: russbjorn@gmail.com	Email: russbjorn@gmail.com		
Parcel Address if different than above: 3696 US-41, Mohawk, Michigan 49950			

ZONING ORDINANCE AMMENDMENT IS REQUESTED FOR THE FOLLOWING

(choose one and site the specific ordinance tex	t or map change requested)
O *Text Ammendment with following conditions:	Text Ammendment without conditions
O *Map Ammendment with following conditions:	Map Ammendment without conditions EP&M To AG

*See Section 20.10 Conditional Rezoning for further information concerning conditions

Required findings of fact to be submitted with this application:

- 1. What, if any, identifiable conditions related to the petition have changed which justify the petitioned change in zoning?
- 2. What, if any, error in judgment, procedure, or administration was made in the original Ordinance which justifies the petitioned change in zoning?
- 3. What are the precedents and the possible effects of precedence which might result from the approval or denial of the petition?
- 4. What is the impact of the amendment on the ability of the County and other governmental agencies to provide adequate public services and facilities and/or programs that might reasonably be required in the future if the petition is approved?
- 5. Does the petitioned zoning change adversely affect the environmental conditions or value of the surrounding property?
- 6. Are there any significant negative environmental impacts which would reasonably occur if the petitioned zoning change and resulting allowed structures were built such as:
 - a. Surface water drainage problems
 - b. Wastewater disposal problems
 - c. Adverse effect on surface or subsurface water quality
 - d. The loss of valuable natural resources such as forest, wetland, historic or scenic sites, wildlife, mineral deposits, or valuable agricultural land?
- 7. Does the petitioned zoning change generally comply with the policies and uses proposed for the area in the adopted Comprehensive Plan of Keweenaw County? If not, and if the proposed zoning change is reasonable, considering all other relevant factors, then the Plan should be amended before the requested zoning amendment is approved.
- 8. Whether all the uses allowed under the proposed rezoning would be compatible with other zones and uses in the surrounding area.
- 9. Whether the uses allowed under the proposed rezoning would be equally or better suited to the area than uses allowed under the current zoning of the land.
- 10. If a specific property is involved, can the property in question be put to reasonable economic use in the zoning district in which it is presently located?

Please attach or write below any additional information you deem necessary to explain the rezoning request. I've been looking to buy land as close to home as I could for the last 3 years, it seems that everyone is looking to buy land nowadays, so the demand is sky high, and the supply is super low. When I got a positive lead on this 40 acre parcel that is only a short four-wheeler ride through the woods from my parents house, I was super excited. I have big plans to build a homestead, live off that land as much as we can, and quietly raise a family on the outskirts of a small town, like myself and my siblings were fortunate enough to experience growing up. The plan is to split off a 14 acre piece for my older brother who will eventually build a house on and use the land in a similar manner as I plan. I had only known the property to be zoned Agricultural because thats what the County GIS has it listed as, so I was surprised to learn during the appraisal process of the bank loan that it is actually zone CEP & Manufacturing.

I hereby grant permission for members of the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator to enter the abovedescribed property for the purpose of gathering information related to this application

Owners Signature:	Kash Ein 3 jann 8/7/25 Date: 6/17/25	*****
Applicants Signature:	Rosff (in 3 jour) 8/1/25 Date: 6/17/25	

COMPLETED APPLICATION WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND FEE MUST BE RETURNED TO:

Keweenaw County Zoning Administrator Keweenaw County Courthouse 5095 Fourth Street Eagle River, MI 49950

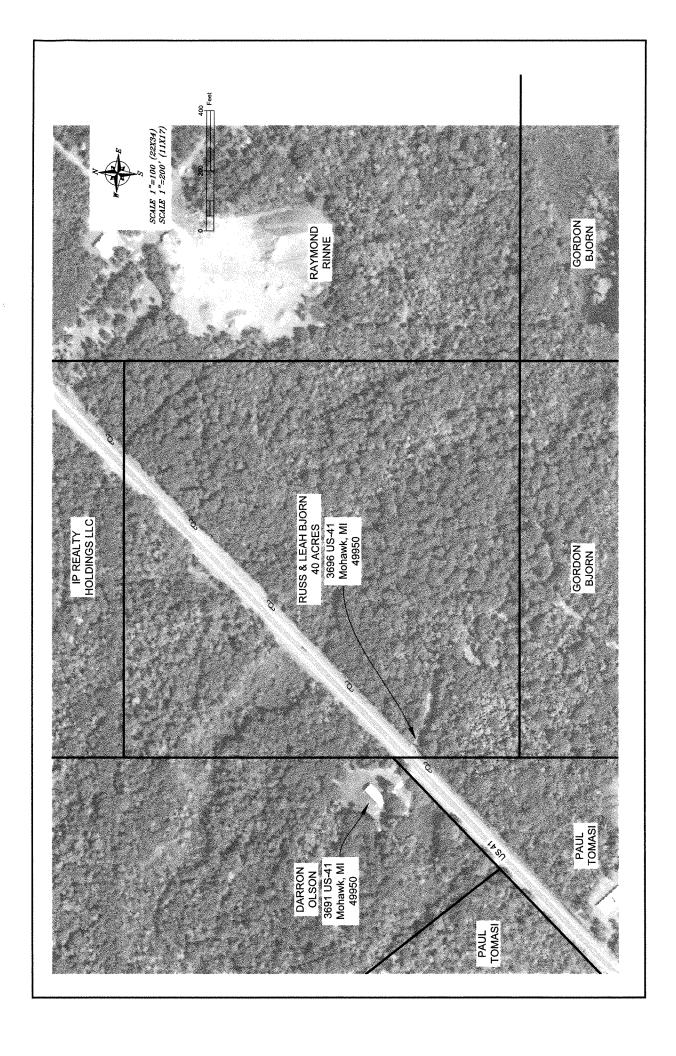
Email: planning@keweenawcountyonline.org

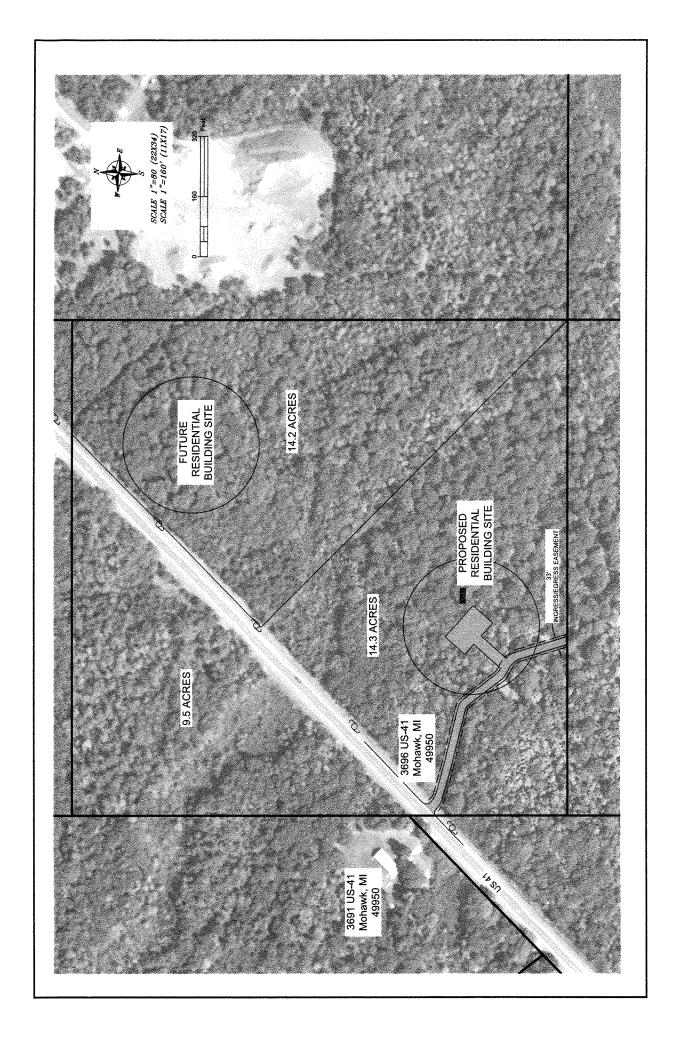
Phone: 906-337-3471 ext 5

Make checks payable to: Keweenaw County

Credit Card Payments may be made at: Equalization Online - Keweenaw County

- 1. Property ownership changed from Verdant Timber, Michigan LLC to a young family looking to build a home.
- 2. In my opinion, with the site having a fair number of wetlands, it may be hard for a business or manufacturing operation to build and expand without interrupting said wetlands. Thinking about how equipment and material storage yards always seemed to get pushed further and further to their limits, no matter the business or the place. It seems to be better suited for a "smaller" scaled zone, such as agricultural.
- 3. A successful rezone will either continue to allow local families like ourselves to purchase land and raise a family locally, or an unsuccessful rezone will make it unobtainable to for us and people alike to raise the next generation in the small town we always called home.
- 4. I don't foresee the impact of 2 additional residences outside of Mohawk having significant impact on the County or other agencies.
- 5. No, not much will change besides a small clearing for a building site about 400 feet through the trees off of US-41. SEMCO Energy may run a gas line further up US-41 to service more houses in the future, which would increase the existing house values and save money on their energy bills as well.
- 6. There are some super obvious changes in elevation and vegetation on this 40 acre parcel, the creek and swampy areas will not need to be manipulated because there is enough build-able acreage elsewhere for a small homestead.
- 7. The zoning change would compliment the Comprehensive Plan of Keweenaw County in the following ways: Goal 1, Future Growth and Development. A small town growing with business also needs to grow with housing. If my brother and I can build forever homes in the same small town that we grew up in, that's two more additional taxable estates, also the home he would sell in Mohawk when he builds a new house. Goal 2, Open Space. I've already got ideas as to where I would build my house in the future (see attached pdf), it's approximately 400 feet off US-41 through the trees and it will be relatively hard to notice a house most times and especially during full foliage. I plan to utilize the already existing driveway, this helps maintain the natural vegetation buffer, scenic views and historical timber in the area. In talks with my brother about where he would like to build when I eventually split off a piece for him to build on, he has the same plans as myself, maintain a good barrier of trees between the house and highway and build the house in a spot that is not so noticeable from the road. Goal 3, Ecosystem Protection. As I've previously mentioned, the good number of wetlands on the property may not be best suited for a business or manufacturing operation to be installed. With the rapid expansion and growing footprint that most businesses see from year 1 to year 10, it may be hard to avoid such wetland areas on this property. Whether it's the small creek along the southern border, or the bigger swampy creek that runs right through the middle of both parcels on both sides of the highway, I would think there are low odds of such wetlands being disturbed with commercial development.
- 8. There is also some Agricultural zoning nearby, others which seem to make more sense to be zoned agricultural. (i.e. Gordon Bjorn).
- 9. Since Verdant Timber had the property enrolled in the Commercial Forest program, they were getting tax breaks on the property. I plan to build a house on the property someday, and also split off a 14 acre piece for a sibling to build a house and raise his family on soon too. This would not only stop those tax breaks on the whole 40 acre parcel, but also boost tax revenue with the 2 new taxable residences.
- 10. As the new owner, I have no interest in building a business or manufacturing operation, so under the current zoning I would not be able to utilize the property.







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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Keweenaw County Planning Commission

The Keweenaw County Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing at 4:00pm on Monday, August 25, 2025, at the Keweenaw County Courthouse. 5095 Fourth Street, Eagle River, Michigan to review and take public comment on the following request.

This may be the only presentation of this item before the Planning Commission, and you are invited to attend. The public may appear at the hearing in person, or by counsel, to be heard and submit evidence with respect to the application. Public comments received before 4:00 August 19, 2025 will be included in the Zoning Administrator Staff Report. Public comments received from August 20 - August 25, 2025 will be included in the Planning Commission packets prior to the meeting.

Planning Commission members may not receive or engage in ex-parte contact with the applicant, other interested parties in the application, or members of the public concerning the applicant or issues presented in the application.

REZONING AMENDMENT REQUEST:

An Amendment to the Keweenaw County Zoning Ordinance Map from M (Manufacturing District) & B (Business District) and to AG (Agricultural District) to allow new owners to build a family home.

Property Owner/Applicant: Russ Bjorn

Contact: 906-369-5041

Parcel Number: 42-101-27-201-010

Zoning: M and B

A copy of the complete application package is available for review at the Keweenaw County Courthouse, 5095 Fourth Street, Eagle River, MI 49950.

Written comments should be addressed to:

Keweenaw County Planning Commission, c/o KC Zoning Administrator, 5095 Fourth Street, Eagle River, MI 49950

Posted August 8, 2025 by:

Susan M Hockings, Keweenaw County Zoning Administrator 906-337-3471

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Posted August 8, 2025 by:

Susan M Hockings, Keweenaw County Zoning Administrator 906-337-3471

To: Allouez Township Supervisor

From: Keweenaw County Zoning Administrator

Re: 2025 Zoning Ordinance amendment Request from Russ Bjorn

Date: August 7, 2025

As required by Public Act 110 of 2006, The Keweenaw County Planning Commission is submitting for review and recommendation, a proposed amendment from Russ Bjorn to the Keweenaw County Zoning Ordinance. This amendment proposal would:

Rezone 40 acres of property recently purchased by Russ & Leah Bjorn from Manufacturing (M) and Business (B) to Agriculture (AG). The purpose is to allow for a single family home and hobby farm.

Attached is a copy of the proposed zoning change submitted by Russ Bjorn with his supporting documentation. This rezoning request has been accepted by the Keweenaw County Planning Commission. A public hearing has been scheduled for August 25, 2025, at 4:00pm. (see attached Public Notice)

Allouez Township has 30 days from receipt of this transmittal to respond if you choose to do so. A final recommendation from the Planning Commission to the Keweenaw County Board of Commission will not be made until the above 30 days have past.

Respectfully,

Susan M Hockings

Keweenaw County Zoning Administrator

KEWEENAW COUNTY EQUALIZATION, ZONING AND CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS

CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS
5095 FOURTH STREET
EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

RUSS RIBERN 1282HIGHLAND VR APT 4 BLACKFOOT, LDRHO 83221



KEWEENAW COUNTY

Equalization, Zoning and Construction Codes Departments 5095 FOURTH STREET EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

MERICAN TOREST MANAGMENT INC 850 W. SHARON AVENUE SCITE 2 HOUGHTON, MI 49931

KEWEENAW COUNTY

EQUALIZATION, ZONING AND CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS 5095 FOURTH STREET EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

TAUL LOMASI TRUST
498 TOMASI ROAD
MOHAWK, MI
APROD



KEWEENAW COUNTY

EQUALIZATION, ZONING AND CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS 5095 FOURTH STREET EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

GORDON É, JARLENE BARRN FRUST 120 Bex 33 Mottawk, MI 49950

KEWEENAW COUNTY

Equalization, Zoning and Construction Codes Departments 5095 Fourth Street Eagle River, MI 49950-9700

JP REALTH HOLDINGS LLC G INTERNATIONAL PAPER & REALTH HOLDING 6400 POPLAR AVE. NEMPHIS, XX TN 4500C



KEWEENAW COUNTY

EQUALIZATION, ZONING AND CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS
5095 FOURTH STREET
EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

PO BOX & JAMIE OLSON HOHAWK, MIT MOHAWK, MIT 4995

KEWEENAW COUNTY

EQUALIZATION, ZONING AND CONSTRUCTION CODES DEPARTMENTS 5095 FOURTH STREET EAGLE RIVER, MI 49950-9700

RAYMOND RINNE PORTER CITY, MIT COPPER CITY, MIT LOPPER CITY, MIT 49917



