

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Whitewater Township Hall, 5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
231-267-5141 Phone

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES
Wednesday, October 1, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair DeYoung called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
A microphone check was done.

Public Attendance: 8 (approximately)

ROLL CALL: Secretary Peltonen called Roll.

Present:

Keith DeYoung, Chair
Rene Stratton, Vice Chair
Denise Peltonen, Secretary
Carl Wroubel, Member
Sadie Merchant, Member
Randy Mielnik, Township Board Trustee

A quorum was established.

Absent:

David Boesler, Member (excused)

ALSO PRESENT:

Zoning Administrator Deb Graber
Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST AGENDA:

- Remove 8/14/25 Minutes from Agenda (previously approved)
- Move New Business / AIS Site Plan Review SPR #2025-04 to after Correspondence heading
- Add "Budget" to Secretary Peltonen's Report.

Board Action:

Mr. DeYoung made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Wroubel seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chair DeYoung referenced past comments regarding the Planning Commission's review of large communities for ideas regarding Short-term Rentals. He clarified the PC is looking at all sizes of communities when reviewing Ordinance contents.

There were no Public Comments.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Special Meeting Minutes of 8/14/25:

Previously approved at 9/3/25 meeting.

Special Meeting Minutes of 8/26/25: Amendments: Yes

Board Action:

Ms. Merchant made a motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of 8/26/25 as amended. Ms. Stratton seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Regular Meeting Minutes of 9/3/25: Amendments: None.

Board Action:

Mr. Mielnik made a motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of 9/3/25 as presented. Mr. DeYoung seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Mr. David Boesler, PC Member. Resignation due to family commitments.
- Whitewater Township Fire Chief Josh Morgan, 9/23/25. Re: Fire Code Review

NEW BUSINESS:

Site Plan Review AIS: SPR Case #2025-04:

Zoning Administrator Deb Graber provided an overview of the project. The Planning Commission held extensive discussion regarding Site Plan requirements and the proposed Site Plan.

A written communication was received from Mr. Jerry Tomczak outlining his objections about the landscape berm requirements in the Site Plan detail.

Mr. Kraig Johnson, representing AIS/Beherenwald was present.

A memo from Mr. Travis Munn of Gourdie Fraser was included in the packet regarding lack of clarity on the drainage patterns and storm water management for the proposed improvements. It also included recommendations. Mr. Johnson demonstrated on the map of the property the existing retaining pond and expounded on the request of Gourdie Fraser regarding movement by 10' and a 3' deepening of the pond.

Mr. Jerry Tomczak, 408 Cedar Street, Elk Rapids, MI, read aloud his correspondence regarding the 17 acres he owns that are adjacent to the AIS property, the landscape plan and berm. He does not believe the Site Plan aligns with earlier discussions at PC meetings with AIS and their commitment to providing a continuous berm to abate site and noise. He also addressed the lack of storm water management/improvements in the Site Plan, septic, setback and elevations. He inquired about accent door lighting approval and outdoor storage. The Master Plan does not show this to be N1. He wants to protect his interest and permitted uses.

Zoning Administrator Graber reviewed various Zoning Reports to clarify topics.

Mr. Johnson and the Planning Commission went over the Site Plan and concerns. Mr. Johnson stated AIS is exceeding berm requirements. The property owner to the west specifically requested no berms between their N1 properties.

Commissioner Mielnik stated the Zoning Ordinance Site Plan requirements consist of 26 items; all of which are not included in the plan. A complete and thorough Site Plan is required for approval.

Fire Chief Morgan reviewed the Site Plan on behalf of the Fire Department regarding a fire lane, access roads, adequate separation between buildings, etc. He requested a Letter of Conditional Approval to ensure appropriate fire access.

There was ongoing discussion regarding development standards in the Ordinance on topography, landscaping, berms, specification of types of trees and plant materials used, screening, drainage etc.

Board Action:

Mr. DeYoung made a motion to approve **Site Plan Review AIS: SPR Case #2025-04** with the following Special Conditions:

1. Provide a landscape plan consistent with Article 10 of Township Ordinances, consistent with the previous plan and that it be submitted to the Zoning Administrator.
2. Approval of the Site Plan by the Fire Chief.
3. Meet conditions in 9/26/25 letter from Gourdie Fraser.

Ms. Peltonen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Stratton-Y, Meilnik-Y, Merchant-Y, Wroubel-Y, Peltonen-Y, DeYoung-Y. Motion carried.

REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS:

Zoning Administrator – Deb Graber: ZA Graber’s report was in the meeting packet. She additionally reported: There were 20 permits issued this month. There will be new projects coming to the PC. The ZBA had an appeal last week. STR complaints have dropped off. There are new complaints on camping in campers without permits; this requires a Land Use Permit.

Mr. C’s restaurant has an offer on the property. Hutson’s/John Deere plans to add a structure to their property. Grand Traverse Plastics is on hold awaiting approval of water from the Tribe and changes will be made to their plans for a driveway culvert.

ZA Graber is expecting new Land Divisions; one of which is an 80-acre Cook Road parcel. There may be two new ZBA appeals.

Chair – Keith DeYoung – Time Management:

Chair DeYoung noted that meetings have been lengthy in the recent past and that, as Chair, he will attempt to keep things moving along during the course of a meeting.

Vice-Chair – Rene Stratton: No Report.

Secretary – Denise Peltonen:

Budget:

Ms. Peltonen reviewed the budget for Consulting Fees.

\$60k was allotted for the year; \$6,500 has been used YTD. A \$2,500 purchase order from Gourdie Fraser (GFA) is on today’s Agenda to discuss.

Township Board Representative – Randy Mielnik:

Two Zoning Amendments will be on the Township Board’s meeting Agenda for the 10/9/25 meeting. A Public Hearing was held last night on the proposed Civil Infractions Ordinance (CIO). Approximately 75 people were in attendance. No action was taken on the matter.

The Township is pleased with LIAA managing Zoom services. The Supervisor noted upcoming vacancies that will be available on the Planning Commission in the next few months.

Secretary Peltonen inquired about the Planning Commission’s stance on the use of Zoom Public Comments during regular comment portions of a meeting. Chair DeYoung stated the PC previously discussed the matter and will follow the same procedures as the Township Board, allowing Zoom Public Comments only during Public Hearings.

ZBA Representative – Carl Wroubel:

Mr. Wroubel stated the ZBA heard an appeal at its recent meeting. It was an Island Lake property. The owners own the island and the property from which they access it. They requested building a garage on the vacant property. They also provide the use of their ramp for neighbors to launch and take boats out of the lake. The ZBA granted the request over a year ago; however, it expired without the property owner taking any action. The ZBA granted the variance again.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Zoning Ordinance - Giffels Webster:

Planners Mr. Andy Aamodt and Ms. Stephanie Osborn of Giffels Webster met with the PC via Zoom. They provided an in-depth presentation about various bundles of services in the following areas:

- Development Standards
- Condominium Development
- PUD (Planned Unit Development)
- COPUD (Corridor Overlay Planned Unit Development)

PC Members discussed and submitted, through an interactive process, areas of consideration, suggested changes, language clarification, and Ordinance content. Giffels Webster will provide new draft language for the November 5 meeting. The PC will focus on one bundle at a time.

ROWG – Resident Outreach Work Group:

Vice Chair Stratton reported the ROWG's second meeting is scheduled October 7. They are conducting research on communities in Michigan. Hard copies and electronic copies in OneDrive are available for review on information gathered to date. She stated much information with a strong level of detail has been compiled on definitions, fees, regulations (licensing) and district approaches. Future plans include a survey and community workshops.

A quote from Giffels Webster was sought for assistance, and she is speaking with a resident who is a retired Planner.

The ROWG needs another PC Member to fill the void of Mr. Boesler due to his resignation from the Planning Commission.

Wineries and Tasting Rooms Ordinance:

Based on his background as a former Winemaker and Board Member for the Michigan Wine Collaborative, Whitewater Township Fire Chief Morgan provided information for the PC to consider as they draft a proposed Wineries and Tasting Rooms Ordinance.

He outlined the issues faced by Old Mission Peninsula and the recent lawsuit there. Chief Morgan highlighted information in the current draft Ordinance on the following issues:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| -50 Acre Requirement | -Traffic |
| -Event Limits | -Enforcement |
| -Food Service | -Outdoor Uses |
| -Building Size | -Noise |
| -Events | -Agriculture Preservation |

There was discussion among the Planning Commission. Ms. Merchant will make edits to the proposed documents. Chair DeYoung suggested the document be reviewed by legal counsel, after which time the PC will move forward with any additional revisions. There was PC consensus to have the attorney conduct a cursory review.

Board Action:

Mr. DeYoung made a motion to extend the meeting beyond the three-hour mark. Ms. Stratton seconded the motion. VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Private Roads Ordinance Update:

Mr. Mielnik reported he and Commissioner Peltonen have been working on a draft and suggested procuring assistance with Gourdie Fraser to provide professional input on the Ordinance as appropriate engineering is required. They are also consulting with Fire Chief Morgan regarding Fire Department requirements with regards to roads. An invoice for service was presented from Gourdie Fraser in the amount of \$2,500 to review prior versions of the Whitewater Ordinance and prepare a basic Private Road Ordinance.

Board Action:

Ms. Peltonen made a motion for services to be provided by Gourdie Fraser (GFA) with a scope of work to include preparation of a draft Private Road Ordinance for the Planning Commission and the Township Board to consider. Work to include meetings with stakeholder group to incorporate key elements specific to the Township, meeting attendance coordination and applicable obligatory agencies and changes as needed for a fee not to exceed \$2,500. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Mielnik-Y, Merchant-Y, Wroubel-Y, Peltonen-Y, Stratton-Y, DeYoung-Y. Motion carried.

Outside Venue Ordinance Update:

Tabled to next month's meeting

NEW BUSINESS:

None. (AIS Site Plan moved on Agenda placement.)

NEXT MEETING:

The next Planning Commission Regular Meeting will be Wednesday, November 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Mike Jacobson, Skegemog Point Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690:

The Private Road Ordinance not being adopted had nothing to do with the former PC's efforts. The former Township Board did not act upon it. He asked for clarity on Giffells Webster telephone interactive process. He couldn't see the Zoom television screen, nor did he have ability to read the questions or participate as other non-PC Members did.

Ms. Kim Mangus, 5101 Brown Bear Lane, Williamsburg, MI 49690:

The PC is tackling too many fronts and encouraged them to take as much time as it takes. Former PC Members in the community would be happy to give input on past actions.

PC DISCUSSION / COMMENTS:

Action Items for PC Members Reviewed (Discussion):

Mr. Mielnik stated a Zoning Ordinance should speak for itself and not require consultation with people who may have initially worked on it.

Regarding Site Plan Review, the Ordinance specifically describes what is to be in a Site Plan submittal for the engineer, who produces the Site Plan. It is not helpful to the PC to receive a Site Plan that is not complete. Ms. Stratton stated it is not desirable to approve a Site Plan without all information, subsequently needing to add conditions to the motion.

In response to Ms. Mangus' comment, Mr. Mielnik noted that there may be multiple projects in process at one time; they don't all move forward at the same rate.

Ms. Stratton stated that dedicated meetings with Giffells Webster would be beneficial with a sole focus as it is time-intensive during a regular meeting Agenda. The PC would like the Zoning Administrator to be at those meetings.

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Short-term Rental (STR) Policy Options for Local Communities (MSUE) – in meeting packet. DeYoung and Merchant will be attending.

ADJOURNMENT:

Board Action:

Mr. DeYoung made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Stratton seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10:26 p.m.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary