



**PRESQUE ISLE TOWNSHIP**  
**Planning Commission Minutes**  
**January 6, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.**

**Call to Order**

6:00 PM

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Pledge was recited.

**Swearing-In of New Members**

Stacy Holmén, Dick Lefevre, Cynthia Paavola, and Jennifer Wiczorkowski were administered the oath of office by Township Supervisor Stephen Lang.

**Roll Call**

Present: Chair Tom Guyer, Vice Chair Lisa Larkin, Secretary Tom Ludwig, Board Liaison Jennifer Wiczorkowski, and members Stacy Holmén, Dick Lefevre, and Cynthia Paavola. Township Supervisor and Zoning Administrator Stephen Lang was also in attendance.

**Election of Officers**

Guyer began by acknowledging the achievements and qualifications of Lisa Larkin, Stacy Holmén, and Cynthia Paavola. A motion was made by Guyer, supported by Ludwig, to appoint Lisa Larkin to the office of Chair, Stacy Holmén to the office of Vice Chair, and Cynthia Paavola to the office of Secretary. A roll call vote was taken. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Approval of Agenda**

A motion was made by Larkin, supported by Lefevre, to approve the agenda. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes (12/2/24)**

A motion was made by Paavola, supported by Ludwig, to approve the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, meeting minutes. Ayes: 5. Abstentions: 2. Motion carried.

**Comments from the Audience: (3-minute limit per audience member)**

The commission heard from two (2) audience members.

1. A grievance was made about the pine trees obstructing clear vision of oncoming traffic near Highland Pines and Pine Street. Lang stated that he had already discussed the matter with David Kowalski, Superintendent of the Presque Isle County Road Commission (PICRC). Lang indicated that he would contact Kowalski for an update.
2. A grievance was made regarding trees obstructing clear vision of oncoming traffic near East Grand Lake Road and Rayburn. Lang stated that he would speak to the PICRC Superintendent about the issue.



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**Correspondence:**

Guyer reported that he received correspondence from incoming Planning Commission member Mike Cermak regarding the potential time-of-transfer and tree ordinances. Guyer indicated that he would address the correspondence during those respective discussions.

**Unfinished Business:**

- a. Continuing Discussion of Potential Time-of-Transfer Ordinance (Septic-Well)**
- b. ZBA Liaison**

Time-of-Transfer Ordinance: Guyer stated that he had circulated his suggestions for the proposed ordinance. He noted that if the commissioners agree to the changes, a revised draft could be submitted for review to Northeast Michigan Council of Governments Deputy Director and Chief Planner Denise Cline and attorney Tim Gulden. Guyer then asked for comments from the commissioners.

Larkin indicated that once the ordinance goes into effect, septic systems without a permit would be required to be evaluated within 12 months. She noted that before passing an ordinance, the commission would need to determine which homes do not have septic permits. She questioned the amount of time it would take for such a project. Lang proposed sending a letter to homeowners to ask when they last had their septic evaluated. He also offered to research assessment records to determine what year homes were built and submit his findings to the commission.

Holmén questioned if the District Health Department #4 (DHD4) would have the manpower to complete the septic evaluations within 12 months given the personnel available. Guyer indicated that the issue will be addressed during negotiations with DHD4.

The commissioners next discussed each of the proposed revisions and concluded:

1. The commission will receive a notice from the Presque Isle Township Assessor when a property is transferred.



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2. If the commission receives notification of a property transfer, the new owner must have the septic system evaluated within 60 days.
3. If property is transferred in the winter when an inspection can't be carried out, then the amount equal to the inspection fee should be placed in escrow with the Title Insurance Company by the seller.
4. The title of the document will be changed from *Septic Inspection and Property Transfer Ordinance* to *Septic/Well Inspection and Property Transfer Ordinance*.

When there were no further comments, the commissioners agreed to submit a revised document with the changes discussed to Gulden and Cline for review.

ZBA Liaison: (The commissioners discussed this item outside of the established agenda order after the tree ordinance deliberation.)

Guyer noted that under the Planning Commission's bylaws, the chair is responsible for nominating the Zoning Board of Appeals Liaison. He proposed the appointment of Cynthia Paavola and discussed her qualifications. Larkin supported the nomination and Paavola accepted the position.

**New Business:**

- a. **Tree Ordinance**
- b. **2024 Planning Commission Annual Report**

Tree Ordinance: (The commissioners discussed this item outside of the established agenda order before the ZBA Liaison appointment.)

Guyer began by introducing resident Wayne Buszka who was proposing the creation of a tree ordinance in Presque Isle Township. Mr. Buszka had provided a copy of the City of Alpena's tree ordinance to the commission as an example and explained the reasoning behind his request.



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Guyer asked Lang if he had any authority to deal with tree complaints as the Zoning Administrator. Lang explained that he did not.

Guyer next read aloud the correspondence received from incoming Planning Commission member Mike Cermak. Mr. Cermak pointed out that Presque Isle Township is a rural community unlike Alpena. He wrote that he didn't see a need for anything beyond a basic tree ordinance that would cover dead and fallen trees along property lines. He also questioned whether existing county and state laws may already govern such situations.

Guyer then asked for input from the other commissioners.

Paavola shared a story of when a neighbor's tree fell onto her house and her insurance had to cover the cost. She indicated that she would support such an ordinance.

Wieczorkowski shared a story of when a tree had fallen onto a neighboring property. She expressed concern over how such an ordinance would be enforced due to the township's limited resources.

Ludwig agreed with Cermak that there is a difference between a city and a rural township. He also indicated that there should be something enacted to address safety concerns.

Guyer stated that he would be in favor of moving forward with an ordinance. He recommended using Section 102-40 of the Alpena ordinance (*Private Trees*) as a reference.

Holmén questioned if any of the township's existing ordinances could be modified to include hazardous trees. She also recommended looking at tree ordinances which have been enacted in other rural lake communities.

Larkin suggested that the ordinance be limited to C1 and R2 districts where the houses are closer together. She also



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indicated that an ordinance might motivate residents to address hazardous trees on their property.

Lefevre stated that he was in support of an ordinance for safety concerns. He noted that there is a big difference between the city of Alpena and rural areas. He also expressed concern about how the ordinance would be enforced.

When there were no more comments, Guyer suggested that the commission continue the tree ordinance discussion in February. The commissioners agreed.

Lang indicated that he would contact the township's attorney about modifying an existing ordinance to include hazardous trees.

The commission next heard comments from two (2) audience members.

2024 Annual Report: Guyer stated that according to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission must provide an annual report to the Township Board of Trustees. He asked the commissioners who served last year (Paavola, Ludwig, Larkin and Lefevre) for any comments on the final draft presented. When there were no further comments, Guyer indicated that the report would be signed and submitted to the board.

**Reports:**

- a. Zoning Administrator – Steve Lang**
- b. Board Liaison – Cynthia Paavola**
- c. ZBA Liaison – Tom Guyer**

Zoning Administrator: Lang began by discussing items which were not passed in the Michigan legislature in 2024 and would have to be reintroduced for consideration in 2025. The issues included the preemption of local zoning authority on siting of sand and gravel mining operations and the creation of a short-term rental statute maintaining local zoning authority.



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Lang next reported that letters to previous Short-Term Rental applicants were being sent. He indicated that one application had already been approved.

Lang also provided an overview of a recent federal court case, *Hart v. Township of Presque Isle*. He reported that the judge had granted the township's motion for dismissal.

Board Liaison: Report attached.

ZBA Liaison: Lang provided a summary of the special meeting that was held by the Zoning Board of Appeals on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**Comments from the Audience**

(Comments were made outside of the established agenda order before the reports).

The commissioners heard from one (1) audience member.

Former Parks and Recreation Committee member Jan Lefevre informed the commission that the township cannot apply to become a Tree City through the Arbor Day Foundation until a tree ordinance is established. She also recommended that the ordinance includes protections for trees owned by the township and general information about which trees are best to plant.

**Adjournment:**

7:04pm

**Next meeting:** Monday, 2/3/25 at 6:00pm.

Report to the Planning Commission

BOT meeting December 9, 2024

Meeting was called together: Full Board of Trustees in attendance

All Board members were sworn in for the new term of office. Kate Sydlowski will be sworn in the end of December 2024.

New Business: All depositories of Township Funds and signers NO. 16. Approved  
Approved of Committee Liaisons from the BOT  
A new starting time was offered and denied the time is still at 4:00 pm.  
Appointment to all committees were approved.  
March Resolution NO 15 for the BOR dates approved  
Poverty Exemption Resolution NO 17 was approved  
Master Plan Resolution NO. 18 and NO. 19 were approved  
  
Deputy pay for Treasurer and Clerk will be \$14.00 hourly. Approved  
  
PITWFD asked for approval for repair on a trailer -Approved

Meeting adjourned.

Cordially,



Cynthia Paavola-Clerk