Village Of

PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

JULY 9, 2025

MINUTES

Northport

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1. Call to Order, Roll Call

Chair J. Gale called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Commissioners present: L. Cavendish, J. Woomer, B. Newell, H. Scott, M. McMillan, and K. Wessell
Absent: None
Staff present: J. Ottenwess, Zoning Administrator
Public Present: Randi and Chris Thiebaut

2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda approved by consent

3. Public Hearing – Special Use Permit for Short-Term Rental at 375 W Third Street

The public hearing was opened at 6:00 PM to consider a special use permit for a short term rental at 375 W Third Street, with the property owners and zoning administrator present. Zoning Administrator Ottenwess presented a detailed review memo, outlining the required findings of fact and criteria from the zoning ordinance (Article 18.04), including harmony with the neighborhood, non-hazardous use, adequacy of public services, and consistency with the master plan. The findings indicated that the proposed use (short term rental in a single-family detached structure) met all applicable standards and was not inherently detrimental, as long as ordinance conditions were satisfied.

The applicants, Randy and Chris, introduced themselves and explained their intent to use the property as both a personal cottage and a rental when not in residence.

The Planning Commission discussed whether to impose a condition related to a FEMA letter of map amendment (removing the structure from a flood zone). The Planning Commission noted that the process was already underway, and they discussed whether to make this a condition of approval. After discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Scott and seconded by Commissioner Newell to approve the special use permit without conditions. There was no other public present besides the applicant and no public comment, either in person or by Zoom. The motion passed unanimously.

The public hearing was closed at 6:15 PM.

4. Approval of February 19, 2025 and June 11, 2025 meeting minutes

Motion to approve February 19, 2025 meeting minutes; L. Cavendish moved, H. Scott seconded, without amendment. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve June 11, 2025 meeting minutes; L. Cavendish moved, H. Scott seconded, without amendment. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Correspondence

None

6. Public comment

None

7. Reports

a. **Zoning Administrator Report**

Ottenwess stated he had no additional comments to provide beyond his memo. A brief discussion ensued about short-term rentals.

b. **Trustee Report**

The first reading of the PILOT and Attainable Housing Facilities Exemption ordinances were approved and certified letters were sent out. The Village now has a Facebook page for community updates. Bob Newell was recognized as Citizen of the Year. At a recent work session, topics included the Seventh Street property and the possibility of transferring it to the Land Bank Authority for cleanup and potential attainable housing development. Further discussion is planned for the next meeting. The Village Manager is working on a draft update of the recreation plan. Updates on short term rentals: there will not be a separate STR Task Force; instead, the Village Manager will present further information in August to help the Council determine if additional action is needed. Sewer rates and debt collection were discussed due to potential shortfalls. A water filling station will be installed at the marina, near the farmers market and bike path. The Public Participation Plan is moving forward for approval. There are ongoing reviews of encroachment issues on Second Street and yard/lake properties, as well as research into audit invoices. Trustee Cavendish noted that the Seventh Street property discussion is likely to impact Planning Commission activity in the future.

c. Tree Committee Report

The Tree Committee will not meet in August; the next meeting is planned for September. The Committee's CD (certificate of deposit) will be reinvested with MICLASS, This year, 12 trees were planted, and watering bags have been placed; the weather has been favorable for tree growth. There is a goal to plant 13 more trees if possible. The Committee's can collection fundraiser is ongoing and successful, with high volume, especially on weekends. An intern from the Conservation District helped create a basic blueprint for a tree inventory, which will be expanded, and the village is moving forward with Silversmith software to manage a public tree inventory. The Committee is developing a tree education document to distribute to residents, aiming to increase awareness and promote voluntary compliance rather than strict code enforcement. The Committee is building an endowment from can collection proceeds to ensure funding for tree planting continues even if collections stop in the future.

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8. Discussion Items

a. **Discussion of Master Plan Economic Characteristics (Part 1, Section 7-pages 31-36) and Discussion of Master Plan General Land Use Policies & Zoning Plan (Part 2, Section 1-pages 38-42) –** The Planning Commission discussed updating the Economic Characteristics section of the Master Plan, emphasizing the need for actionable and accountable goals. There was a proposal to set a goal for the Village to become a certified Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) within a specific timeframe, but it was clarified that RRC certification is no longer required for most state funding, so it is a lower priority compared to other goals like affordable housing. The importance of supporting attainable housing as a counterbalance to short-term rentals was highlighted, with a focus on encouraging year-round population and business activity. Commissioners discussed the need for better engagement with local business owners, suggesting annual meetings (both individual and group) to identify business needs and issues, and possibly conducting a business survey for consistent feedback. The integration of Michigan Green Communities goals and improved place-making (such as better signage and wayfinding) were suggested as additional Master Plan objectives.

b. Public Properties Rubric
The Commission undertook a detailed review of Village-owned properties to identify those with the most potential for housing or other development, aiming to prioritize a shortlist for further consideration. Factors considered included zoning, wetlands, access, existing use, and community needs. The process for finalizing the property list includes further review for historical/cultural considerations and legal restrictions, with the intention to revisit and refine the list before presenting it to the Village Council.

9. New Business –

a. As Suggested by the Planning Commission
None

10. Public Comment
None

11. **Board Member Comment**
None

12. **Adjournment –** There being no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:00 pm.

Prepared by: Jered Ottenwess, Zoning Administrator

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