Village Of

# PLANNING COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

## MAY 13, 2026

## MINUTES

Northport

**1. Call to Order, Roll Call**

Chair J. Gale called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
*Commissioners present:* L. Cavendish, J. Gale, M. McMillan, B. Newell, H. Scott, and J. Woomer
*Absent:* None
*Staff present:* J. Ottenwess, Zoning Administrator
*Public Present:* K. Abbey, J. Rogers (via Zoom), S. Scott, and V. Slot (via Zoom)

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Agenda approved by consent

**3. Public Hearing – Special Use Permit for Short-Term Rental at 160 West Street**

- Resolution 2026-5

Chair Gale opened the public hearing at 6:01 PM. The Zoning Administrator provided background information about the Special Use Permit application and presented his findings. Chair Gale solicited public comments.

Sander Scott, Leelanau Township resident and Owner/Applicant representative, spoke in support of the application. Mr. Scott stated that the home was newly constructed on a previously vacant lot by his son, a local builder and seventh-generation Northport resident, and emphasized that the project was intended both to demonstrate local craftsmanship and to support the builder's growing family. He stated that the short-term rental use would provide flexibility while the home is marketed for sale and would help offset carrying costs, noting that the property was not intended to permanently remove an existing year-round residence from the housing stock. Mr. Scott submitted a written copy of his comments for the record.

Virginia Foley, 10797 North Shore Drive, spoke during the public hearing and asked questions regarding the Village's proposed short-term rental registration fee, including whether existing permit holders would be grandfathered and how the fee revenue would be used administratively. Following clarification from staff that the fee proposal remained under Village Council consideration and that existing registrations for the current year would not be affected, Ms. Foley thanked the Commission for the explanation and noted that work schedules prevented her from attending daytime work sessions.

Chair Gale closed the public hearing at 6:20 PM.

Motion by L. Cavendish, seconded by B. Newell to approve Resolution 2026-5 as presented. Roll call vote was taken: Cavendish, Gale, McMillan, Newell, Scott, and Woomer voted in favor with none opposing or abstaining. Motion passed unanimously.

**4. Public Hearing – Special Use Permit for Short-Term Rental at 214 E. 6th Street**

- Resolution 2026-6

Chair Gale opened the public hearing at 6:22 PM. The Zoning Administrator provided background information about the Special Use Permit application and presented his findings, included within his meeting memo, as identical to the previous application.

Chair Gale solicited public comments and there were none. Chair Gale closed the public hearing at 6:23 PM.

Motion by H. Scott, seconded by L. Cavendish to approve Resolution 2026-6 as presented. Roll call vote was taken: Cavendish, Gale, McMillan, Newell, Scott, and Woomer voted in favor with none opposing or abstaining. Motion passed unanimously.

**5. Approval of April 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

Motion by M. McMillan, seconded by J. Woomer to approve minutes as presented, passed unanimously.

**6. Correspondence**

Chair Gale referenced correspondence received and available in the meeting packet materials posted online.

**7. Public comment**

None

**8. Reports**

**a. Zoning Administrator Report**

J. Ottenwess referenced his written Zoning Administrator report that was included in the agenda packet and noted that two Short-Term Rental Special Use Permit applications referenced in the report remained incomplete and were not expected to be ready for the June 10 Planning Commission meeting deadline. He reported that a finalized SUP application had been received for 125 East 7th Street, a newly completed home located east of Mill Street, and indicated that the application would likely be scheduled for public hearing in June. The Zoning Administrator also observed that the Village had received more short-term rental special use permit applications in 2026 than land use permit requests, which he described as an interesting development trend.

**b. Trustee Report**

Trustee Cavendish reported on recent Village Council activities, including the upcoming June 6 community cleanup event, ongoing review of the Jacobs engineering study related to NLTUA, potential sale of the West Street property, continued discussion regarding possible mill pond dam millage options, and proposed revisions to the Village fee schedule intended to better align fees with actual administrative costs. She also reported that the Leelanau Community Energy site lease matter was moving toward termination following failure to remedy outstanding issues and noted that Village Council work session times had

recently been changed from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. to improve accessibility while balancing staff scheduling considerations.

**c. Tree Committee Report**

B. Newell reported on ongoing maintenance and fertilization of previously planted trees, recent installation of native dogwoods and serviceberry trees near Trinity Church, and planned planting of additional redbuds. The Committee also discussed the possibility of expanding its role to include broader Village beautification activities, including support for public landscaping, rain garden plantings, and planter maintenance. Additional updates included a successful Arbor Day event, ongoing Tree City USA efforts, restructuring of committee cash handling procedures, and continued fundraising through bottle return collection.

**d. Leelanau County General Plan**

Chair Gale reported on a recent meeting of the Leelanau County General Plan Committee, stating that the committee had continued work on several draft chapters of the countywide plan. She noted that Northport Highlands had been added as a medical facility and that the County had previously identified the golf course as a community amenity. Discussion also referenced draft language related to housing pressures associated with short-term rentals, increased migration during and after the COVID-19 period, and the need for greater flexibility in both year-round and seasonal housing opportunities. It was noted that many of the housing-related concepts under discussion at the county level were generally consistent with ongoing Village planning efforts.

**9. Discussion Items**

**a. Master Plan**

The Planning Commission discussed a proposed scope of services from Place Strategies related to the Village Master Plan update. Commissioners reviewed the proposed tasks and associated costs, including discussion regarding whether certain "master plan coaching" and public engagement components were necessary or should be modified to reduce overall project expense while still ensuring adequate review, editing, and completion of the document. Commissioners generally agreed that completion of the Master Plan remained an important priority and discussed budgeting approximately $30,000 for the effort, subject to further refinement of the scope and clarification from the consultant regarding the services included. By consensus, the Planning Commission directed J. Ottenwess to continue discussions with the consultant, seek clarification and possible revisions to the scope of work, and bring an updated proposal back to the Planning Commission for further consideration at the June 10 meeting.

**b. R-2 S Shoreline Residential District**

J. Woomer recused himself from deliberation due to a potential conflict of interest with his property ownership in the R-2 S Shoreline district.

The Planning Commission continued discussion of proposed amendments to the R-2 S Shoreline Residential District regulations, including revisions intended to move away

from a strictly form-based framework and toward a more conventional shoreline zoning format. Discussion focused on dimensional standards, including minimum buildable width, waterfront setbacks measured from the ordinary high water mark, and impervious surface limitations, including a proposed reduced setback option tied to lower impervious surface coverage and enhanced vegetation protection standards. Commissioners also discussed shoreline vegetation management, including limits on clearing for viewsheds, defining "limbing" separately from clearing, prohibiting removal of healthy trees except under limited circumstances, and discouraging lawns and invasive species within shoreline setback areas. Additional discussion addressed grading, stormwater management, driveway limitations, interpretation of lot area measurements relative to the Ordinary High Water Mark, accommodation of accessory dwelling units, and the potential for limited administrative deviations by the Zoning Administrator under defined circumstances. The Commission directed staff to continue refining the draft language and return with additional revisions for future consideration.

J. Woomer made public comment inquiring about minimum lot area requirements and how the proposed regulations would affect legally nonconforming structures.

**c. Public Participation Plan**

The Planning Commission discussed the draft Public Participation Plan, which had been adapted from a similar document used by Elk Rapids. Commissioners reviewed the organization and level of detail contained in the draft, including whether portions of the legal and policy framework, stakeholder lists, and outreach guidance were more extensive than necessary for the Village's needs. Discussion focused on balancing conciseness with usefulness, including whether stakeholder categories should remain in the main body of the document or be moved to an appendix as examples rather than exhaustive lists. Commissioners also discussed use of terminology consistent with Village practices, including replacing "charrette" with "summit," removing references specific to Elk Rapids, clarifying outreach methods that the Village can realistically support, and the possibility of implementing an email distribution list for public engagement. Chair Gale indicated she would continue refining the draft based on Commissioner feedback and return with revisions at a future meeting.

**10. Public Comment**

V. Slot gave notice of her participation and thanked the Planning Commission for their service.

11. **Board Member Comment**

None

12. **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:52 pm.

*Prepared by: Jered Ottenwess, Zoning Administrator*