

ISHPEMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

1575 U. S. Highway 41 W

Ishpeming, MI 49849

A regular meeting of the Ishpeming Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday February 5, 2026, at 5:00 P.M.

1. **Roll Call:** Tom Lucas, Chair – Present, Steve Baril, Vice-Chair – Present, Kristin Thornton, Secretary- Present, Jeff Solka, Member – Present, Karl Lehmann, Member – Present, Eric Santti, Member – Present, Adam Sundberg, Member – Present, Jim Nankervis- Present, and Fred Vanluven.
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Motion Karl Lehmann Support: Jeff Solka to approve agenda as amended to move public hearing first. All Ayes. Motion Carried.
3. **Public Comment:**
None.
4. **Public Hearing:**

Public Hearing opened by Chair Tom Lucas at 6:06 p.m.

Zoning Administrator informed the people that we will be discussing the potential development of a 20-lot housing development on River St. This would be located near the old Township Wastewater Plant. The Township would be partnering with the Marquette County Land Bank Authority to examine the feasibility of redevelopment of the parcel for housing.

Antonio Adan, Executive Director for the Marquette County Land Bank Authority, informed the public of the mission of the Land Bank and the projects that they have been involved with. The Land Bank Annual report was available for the public. The Land Bank, with help from grants has demolished 125 blighted properties to get back on tax roll and has a Housing Specialist that is focused on bringing housing solutions to the community. The Land Bank is not for profit, money that comes in goes back to the community. 2024 Marquette County Land Bank in conjunction with about 6 local governments did a target market analysis for housing -wanted to know what we needed. It is available for viewing but what is showed, is that people were comfortable with houses of 250,00 or less. Trying to figure out how to bring the price back to the target price.

We are working to have attainable housing. Already zoned R-1 – single family homes. Portion is designated wet land. First step will the state allow us to build there, then go to Brownfield to see if they have funding that can assist in some of the cost \$50,000 -100,000 to see if we can even build on this site. A lot of steps need to happen to see if we can build here.

Discuss & determine if this is a viable spot for this development. There is land in the township that is available to the public at any given time.

Public Comment:

Open to Public Comment – 3 minutes

Stephanie Nelson –Wanted to know if the township would honor an agreement to give her an easement for the back portion of her property, in the event that she decides to sell it. She owns $\frac{3}{4}$ of the land pit.

Brian Wallen – Concerned about turning wooded, public green space area to housing development. He sees people using this green space for walking dogs, snowshoeing, riding snowmobiles in the winter, riding mountain bikes, dirt bikes & hiking in the summer. Two neighborhood kids have built tree forts in recent years. He sees wildlife in this area also. It is a meaningful community area.

Recognize the need for attainable housing – need to see more rental housing.

Stephanie Nelson –That beautiful green space is private property – hers – where the trails & tree houses are being built is private property.

Deanna Johnson – Habitat for Humanity – here as a resident – habitat has worked with the Land Bank – great partner – doing things for the good of the community -

Gary Lafreniere –Who would approve to go forward with this the people or the township board.

Dan Wolf – 581 – what the heck is affordable housing – what is the dollar amount of what is affordable. Antonio explained the calculations for this.

Jarret Moyle – will building these houses increase the residents' taxes.

Jim Gray – Worried that residents would lose a decent chunk of recreation land. He runs his dog here. What other sites were looked at. Heart of this community - large recreation site that we are going to lose.

Missy Wickstrom – support this development. Habitat helped her become a homeowner. Listened to people say they don't want this trash to come in & bring the value of their homes down. Who would benefit from these homes being built? Need to look at future and economic growth to community.

Katie Morrison - huge outdoor person. Couldn't afford anything in the woods. For her mental sanity she needs to walk. Walks the dog every day. Walking distance from home. Usable winter green space that is the spot.

John Massie – do we need 20,000 sf to build in the township. Plating guidelines and local standards. Is the planning commission planning on sticking with their rules?

Antonio Adan - There is a map floating around online. The Land Bank did not commission the drawing, that is not what is being proposed tonight.

Chris Roose – utilize space, walk dog, snowshoes, motorcycles, sxs and drive lots of things through that area. Why he is there – completely agrees with what Missy has to say. We are losing green space. Not against low-income homes, come to some collaborative agreement on how this should be used.

Do not support the location and destruction of green space – gem to Ishpeming Township – wanted to keep quiet about this area – they maintain & make sure available for everyone. Cuts trees. Use that area – so many people from the west Ishpeming side – all use it – some sort of green space maintained.

Paul Altobello – Tilden Township

120 acres across from home was green space and he could walk his dogs – then Aspen Ridge went up. What is better – certain residents that surround the green space which is private anyway or some people potentially having their dream home. Young people getting their houses.

William Stacy – everyone says it is a green space – is owned by Stephanie – she owns $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sand pits. It is not public space, it is private.

Kyle Sihtila – if the neighborhood is built – water sewer & building roads – is it coming from Ishpeming Township taxes.

Infrastructure – extremely expensive – bonding – buy bonds for lower interest.

This site has a water line & wastewater line – worth millions - huge cost savings – will seek grants to mitigate costs.

We keep saying 20 houses –this has not been approved.

Randy Anilla – mineral streets – roads are horrible – worst roads in county – would say they are worse than 3rd world country but that would be an insult to them. What is not getting fixed now should be fixed.

Supervisor Nankervis– water system needs to be fixed first then the roads will be done. Township has been seeking grant funds for the water project in that area.

Antonio – taxable value coming back to the township.

David Huetter – proposal will affect him the most but against his property. Trails – private property – his parcel is right behind this property – some is private but not behind his property. Close to green space most of the trails are on.

Health care provider – useable close exercise vital to our community

Kids have utilized that green space,

Sewage line that goes through goes through his yard – it has been backed up every year – it backs into his basement first. Township has been good and comes when he calls.

Concerned about the lot sizes and where people would put snow.

John Massie – project for the land bank – old sewage plant

Kyle Sihtala – every year property taxes going up. Roads not being fixed in his neighborhood.

What's affordable about 20 brand new homes – grants – it all comes from our tax money - quit splurging.

Why don't you sell the lots for private sale?

Closed public hearing on Subdivision at 6:01 p.m. Only informational – no action was being taken.

Public Hearing opened by Chair Tom Lucas at 6:02 p.m.
Zoning Administrator informed the people that we will be discussing the inquiry of development for the Mather Nursing Home site.

Luke Thomas was not in attendance.

Fred received 2 calls regarding the Nursing Home – one to demolish and the second one was from Luke Thomas who inquired about turning it into a homeless shelter or assisted living. Need a public hearing.

This was just an informal inquiry.

Missy – assisted living – look at property located next to the current nursing home – city of Ishpeming – look at developing that area that is owned by the county.

Derocha – wonderful turnout – thank everyone for speaking.

80 acres owned by county – certainly advocate – as long as it didn't impede on the current plan of expansion for the nursing home.

Bobby Reichel – homeless center – not zoned for this – could it be rezoned for a homeless center.

Chris Roose – zoning standpoint – R-1 - it is special use for residential.

Alex – not allowing any type of shelter into the neighborhood.

Residents impacted many levels.

Zoning is special residential.

Current area – sits in single family zoning – not appropriate or logical.

Local values guaranteed to lose value

Housing would become less desirable and would drive residents out of the area.

Increase call volume for police officers.

Fire department – will these increase our taxes.

Closed public hearing on inquiry of development for the Mather Nursing Home at 6:14 p.m.
Only informational – no action was being taken.

5. **Approval of Minutes:** Motion: Karl Lehmann Support: Jeff Solka and passed to dispense with the reading of previous meeting minutes from December 4, 2025, with the correction of meeting date for December 2, 2026, be corrected to December 3, 2026, and place on file. All Ayes. Motion Carried
6. **Zoning Administrator's Report:** (Exhibit A)
7. **Communications** – None
8. **Old Business:**
9. **New Business:**
 - a. Luke Thomas – Mather Nursing Home Development
10. **Board Comments:**

Tom Lucas – thanks for coming everyone – it was nice to have so many in attendance to see what we are doing.
11. **Supervisor Comments:**
12. **Next Meeting Date:** April 2, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
13. **Adjournment:** Motion: Kristin Thornton Support: Steve Baril and passed to adjourn. All Ayes. Time: 6:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: April 2, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

Kristin Thornton, Secretary