



VILLAGE OF PENTWATER

Planning Commission

ON PENTWATER LAKE AND LAKE MICHIGAN
65 N Hancock Street, P.O. Box 622, Pentwater, Michigan 49449
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Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Chris Conroy called the regular meeting of the Pentwater Village Planning Commission Meeting to order at 6:00 pm, at Park Place, 310 N. Rush Street, Pentwater, with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Conroy (Chair), Jack Provencal, Amy Roberson, Claudia Ressel, and Ron Stoneman

Absent: Dan Nugent and Mary Marshall

Others Present: Larry Conroy, Guest, Aaron Bigelow, Zoning Administrator, Jody TerHaar, Deputy Clerk Treasurer, and Niki Theeuwes, Management Assistant

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Conroy requested that a discussion of the C3 Height Requirement be added to the agenda, as well as discussion of the Museum project support letters.

Motion by Claudia Ressel, second by Amy Roberson to approve the modified agenda.

Voice Vote: Aye: 5 Nay: 0 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Conroy stated that she felt the intent of a motion from the January meeting regarding the Historical Society Museum expansion project may need to be modified. It was determined that the minutes would be accepted as written and additional clarifying language would be discussed during Discussion Item portion of the meeting.

Motion by Ron Stoneman and Claudia Ressel, second by Amy Roberson to approve January 27, 2026 meeting minutes as presented.

Voice Vote: Aye: 5 Nay: 0 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA –

None

PUBLIC HEARING – None

DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Accessory Building Text Amendment – Preliminary Review

Aaron Bigelow, Zoning Administrator, presented information related to the proposal before the Commission regarding a text amendment for accessory buildings. He used GIS mapping to demonstrate existing limits and how the change would potentially affect properties depending on lot size.

Aaron explained that an accessory building (for the Village currently) is any building not the primary building, this includes both an attached or detached garage. He further indicated that impervious surfaces are limited to 50% of the lot size and an accessory building must meet all other zoning requirements regarding setbacks, easements, etc.

Using the GIS for visual representation, the Commission viewed and discussed several existing lots and how the proposed changes could affect properties. Discussion items included:

- Making a text amendment change would affect the whole village, not individual properties.
- If allowing a request for a variance if someone wanted to build outside existing parameters would work in place of making a change. Aaron indicated that building outside the existing ordinance is not a “hardship” and would not fit the requirements for requesting a variance.
- How other similar communities have handled this issue and ordinance they’ve put in place.
- The Village does not have a limit on the number of buildings placed on a lot, only a percentage of square footage.
- The majority of lots fall in the category of under 10,000 square feet.
- Accessory buildings cannot be built on a lot without a primary structure.

After much discussion, the Commission determined that safeguards are in place and felt comfortable with a motion being made.

Motion by Ron Stoneman, second by Jack Provencal to approve the proposed amendment as presented and to move forward preparing for a public hearing.

Voice Vote: Aye: 4 Nay: 1 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

B. Sidewalk Ordinance Discussion

The Planning Commission, on various occasions, have discussed sidewalks. This has included: sidewalks (or lack thereof), in certain areas, issues with current zoning regulations, and how concerns with the state of the existing sidewalks may be addressed.

There was a meeting held on February 20, 2026, between Commission Chair Conroy, Zoning Administrator Aaron Bigelow, Village Manager James “Toby” Van Ess, and Council President Mary Marshall to discuss strategies and tactics to address these concerns.

Chair Conroy indicated that the Commission could discuss and make recommendations, but any final decisions would have to be made by the Village Council. She also stated that ordinances currently in place required sidewalks to be installed on any new builds, but it has not always been enforced.

The concept of any overlay was discussed that could be driven by the needs of specific areas. Those areas would include things like the beach, the school and downtown, where it could be anticipated to have a higher level of pedestrian traffic.

The possibility of a study or sidewalk inventory (last one on file was completed in 2007), was discussed. Commissioner Ressel noted concerns regarding the previous issue of spending time and/or money and no follow-up being completed. It was also noted that trees (specifically where they are planted or who is responsible for roots damaging the sidewalks), will need to be addressed at the same time.

The commission has requested that Chair Conroy and/or Aaron, as Zoning Administrator, check back in with the Council for more direction related to what to use as the rationale for “walkability” or the best routes or certain vital access points to focus on, at least initially. It was also recommended that possibly a meeting with the Council could be scheduled to further discuss the sidewalks and the Council’s vision.

C. Other Discussion Items

Museum Expansion Project – Chair Conroy indicated a possible conflict between what the intent of the council’s request for letters of support and what was provided by the Historical Society.

After discussion, the Commission has clarified to Aaron that they would like to see standardized support letters. Those letters should indicate that the neighbors have seen the plans and fully understand the problems of parking, noise, and other potential issues that could arise depending on the uses of the enhanced space. Or, at the very least, if a Q&A type is used, making sure the questions and answers are completely available and not cut off as in the current packet.

Aaron will communicate with the Historical Society on the clarification of what the Commission is expecting/requesting for the letters of support.

Building Height Ordinance – Chair Conroy brought up that in July of 2024 the Commission worked on changing the ordinance for the C3 building height; however, it does not appear that the ordinance document was ever updated. With the old Village Hall being for sale, she was concerned that this could potentially pose an issue. A question was raised about who is responsible for updating the ordinances. Aaron answered that the Zoning Administrator was responsible for making those changes. He indicated that he would research the issue and make those updates if possible.

Using Google Invites - Commissioner Stoneman requested that research be done to see if the use of a Google calendar invite could be used for the meeting announcements.

NOTE: Commissioner Ressel looked up the question of whether the person making a motion to approve minutes had to have been at the original meeting. She reported that a motion could be made by someone who did not attend the meeting, and that the approval of minutes is based on the trust of the secretary recording the minutes.

DEPARTMENT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Zoning Administrator report attached

PUBLIC COMMENTS –

None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS –

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ressel, second by Provencal to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Voice Vote: Aye: 5 Nay: 0 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved by the Village of Pentwater Planning Commission on _____.