



City Hall
208 North First Avenue
Alpena, Michigan 49707
www.alpena.mi.us

Planning, Development, & Zoning

City of Alpena Planning Commission

Special Meeting

Tuesday, September 20th, 2022 @ 6:00 p.m.

This meeting will be held in Council Chambers as well as virtually.

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://www.gotomeet.me/CityofAlpena/planning-commission>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: [+1 \(571\) 317-3112](tel:+15713173112)

Access Code: 178-564-461

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER;

ROLL CALL;

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Regular meeting June 14, 2022

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMISSION ACTION

1. **22-Z-05 – 216 South 8th Ave. –Rezone from R-2 to R-T**
Approval Standards Provided (Appendix A)
Findings of Fact and Supplemental Information (Appendix B)

BUSINESS

- a) **UNFINISHED:**
- b) **NEW:**
- c) **COMMUNICATIONS OR REPORTS:**
 - a. Zoning Ordinance Updates
- d) **CONTINUING EDUCATION:** See Training Document: Approval of Meeting Minutes when Absent

PUBLIC COMMENT

MEMBER COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT



MINUTES
City of Alpena Planning Commission
Regular Meeting (Council Chambers and Virtual)
June 14, 2022
Alpena, Michigan

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Paul Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

ROLL CALL: PLANNING COMMISSION

PRESENT: Boboltz , Kostelic, Sabourin, Gilmore Wojda, Peterson

ABSENT: Bauer, VanWagoner

STAFF: Montiel Birmingham (Planning, Development, and Zoning Director), Donald Gilmet (Contractual Building Official), Kathleen Sauve (Recording Secretary)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Agenda were approved as printed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting May 10, 2022, minutes were approved as printed.

Sabourin explained the procedures for the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMISSION ACTION: **Case # 22-Z-04** – Jamie Murphy has requested a Conditional Rezoning for the property that he owns located at 933 Lockwood Street from R-2 to R-T to allow for a residential duplex rental dwelling.

Birmingham presented the Approval Standards and Findings of Fact report (See Appendix A & B).

FAVOR: Jamie Murphy, applicant and owner of subject property, stated that he bought the property with the impression that it was already a legal duplex, but it was not, and he inherited the mess. He stated that the building is already separated into two apartments, with occupants that live in each.

OPPOSITION: None.

Sabourin closed the public hearing at 6:10 pm.

Sabourin asked which has the higher authority, the Zoning Ordinance or the Code of Ordinances, for parking, and if the storage building at the back of the property could be removed to allow for a fourth parking spot. He suggested that it could be a condition of approval. Gilmet stated that on-street parking or right-of-way parking does not count towards required parking spaces for Zoning. Gilmet would like to see the storage building stay but give Murphy 24 months to pave the driveway to accommodate the required number of parking spots. Sabourin asked if a site plan was required for a Zoning change. Birmingham stated no. Boboltz said that he has noticed that a lot of properties where the right-of-way is very trodden down from people parking there and he felt there was conflict between allowing other residents to do it and suggesting it not be okay for this situation. Gilmet stated that in the pictures of the property, they can see that it is grass, and not dirt, so the parking is not currently an issue. Birmingham pointed out that parking requirements in apartments complexes only requires one-and-a-half parking spaces per apartment, but for duplexes the City requires two spaces per apartment. Murphy stated that the upstairs is only a one bedroom, so it is unlikely that there will be more than one car there but he is willing to have it paved in the future to accommodate four spaces. Sabourin said that the conflict between the Zoning Code and the Code of Ordinances needs to be addressed to align with one another on their requirements. Murphy asked what type of material it must be paved with. Response from several was concrete, asphalt or brick pavers. Peterson said she thought the two-year timeline for paving the driveway is reasonable because of how long it may take a contractor to do it.

Peterson ***motioned*** to approve the Conditional Rezone with the condition that the driveway must be paved with appropriate material within twenty-four months.

Wojda ***seconded*** the motion.

Motion ***approved*** by unanimous vote.

Case 22-SU-03 – 1105 W. Chisholm Street – Fadi Yousif, representing Zella Cannabis, LLC, has requested a Special Land Use for an Adult Use marijuana retailer.

The Site Plan Review Standards, Special Land Use Approval Standards, and Supplemental Development Approval Standards were all supplied in the packet provided to the board (appendix C). Birmingham presented her Findings of Fact Report (appendix D).

FAVOR: Fadi Yousif, applicant, stated that he would like to add curbside pickup for customers to order online and then be able to pick up at the drive-through. Birmingham informed Yousif that the City of Alpena does not allow curbside pickup. He agreed to not have curbside pickup.

OPPOSITION: Debra Warner, owner of adjacent property directly behind the proposed location, is opposed to having a marihuana retail facility in that location as stated in the letter she sent to Birmingham. She said that the previous businesses located there did not pose any commotion to the currently quiet neighborhood. She stated she did not want anything that would disrupt the neighborhood and she feels this would disrupt the neighborhood and degrade her property which she has worked hard to keep nice. She said she does not disagree with the sale of marihuana, but not in this location adjoining her backyard which she has lived at for thirty-nine years, adding that many of her neighbors felt the same.

With no others wishing to speak in favor or opposition, Vice-Chairman Boboltz closed the public hearing at 6:39 p.m. for deliberation.

Wojda stated that he thought it was a good and thorough plan. He addresses Debra Warner and thanked her for addressing the board with her concerns because they need to hear from the public and where they stand on these matters. Wojda said that from the Commission's perspective, they have to follow the conditions that are out there and the issue of the proximity to residential is something that would concern him if he were in her shoes, and it disturbs him as well. He said that it was something that the Commission considered and took public comment on during the meeting on whether or not to allow this, and Council considered it as well. He went on to say that if they had not allowed them near any residential, there would have been nowhere for the recreational marihuana businesses to go and that is the challenge before them. Wojda stated that all the standards have been met.

Wojda ***motioned*** to adopt the findings with regard to approval standards, to approve the application with two conditions that there be final review of the trees to be installed by City staff, and that the site plan be amended to remove curbside services in accordance with our Ordinance.

Motion ***seconded*** by Kostelic.

Boboltz addressed Warner telling her that he feels for her as well regarding her concerns of the proximity of these businesses to residential neighborhoods. He reiterated that City Council did consider whether or not to allow these in close proximity to residential areas and made the decision that they would allow them within proximity; it is not the job of the Planning Commission to legislate and make that law different; City Council would have to do that. Sabourin informed everyone that the Planning Commission has three master documents that they must produce – the Comprehensive Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and the Capital Improvement Plan. He went on further to explain that the City Council has reviewed and

approved all three documents, making the Planning Commission obligated to support the Ordinance that has been approved. Wojda stated his appreciation for the public who have voiced their opinions so that they may have a better understanding of what some of the public think about this. Sabourin said that the Planning Commission is always looking at redoing the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance and they often hold public hearings for the public's input and encouraged people to attend.

Motion ***approved*** by unanimous vote.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Comprehensive Plan goals – Birmingham addressed the Commission and updated them on Staff thoughts on the topics of focus identified by the Planning Commission at the May 15, 2022 meeting. Wojda stated that he is on the DDA board, and they had to amend the by-laws to allow participation from students. He said we might need to wait until the school year is back in session to recruit students to participate in Planning Commission meetings. Gilmore asked when the Housing Task Force meets, to which Birmingham stated that any of the Planning Commission members are welcome to attend their monthly meetings. Boboltz asked why there is such a housing crisis. Birmingham said it could be the types of housing are an incorrect mix in terms of people and what they are looking for; does the elderly population have the ability to age in place, or the ability to go somewhere that allows them to have the standard of living that they want. Birmingham said the City is looking into a housing study called a Needs Assessment which would identify what types of housing specifically the City would need. Gilmet stated that the City is having a hard time getting professionals to come to Alpena to fill the vacancies within the Building Department because they cannot find the homes they want. He said that the studies that have been done in the past make it very clear that the City needs more ground level housing, affordable housing, and tiny houses to name a few. He said that he thought Brownfield will eventually come into play, along with Landbanks. Birmingham stated that some houses are being rented as Airbnb units, which is not necessarily a bad thing for the City, but there is a balance to all of that and when you start pulling those out of the market, now someone cannot live there. Gilmet said that other cities have entire blocks of Airbnb units, which has altered the character of those entire blocks, and how does Alpena keep that from happening to us. Sabourin said he can understand why people want to own Airbnb units because they make a lot of money.

Birmingham said she would start picking some of the Comprehensive Plan Goal topics off of the list if they did not have any particular priority or order, and she would come back with some questions about specifics that the members would like to see.

NEW BUSINESS: Election of Officers

Wojda ***motions*** to nominate Randy Boboltz for Chairman, Steve Gilmore for Vice Chairman, and Clay VanWagoner as Secretary.

Kostelic ***seconded*** the motion.

Boboltz asked Sabourin what his intentions are following this election. Sabourin stated he plans to not hold any type of Officership but stay an active member of the Planning Commission until the end of his term in December, at which point, he would not accept another appointment from Council.

Motion ***approved*** by unanimous vote.

COMMUNICATIONS OR REPORTS: None.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m., by Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

Clay VanWagoner, Secretary

**City of Alpena
Ordinance No. 21-468**

An ordinance to amend the City of Alpena Zoning Ordinance Article 10 (Adoption and Amendments).

City of Alpena, Alpena County, Michigan ordains:

SECTION 1: AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF ALPENA ZONING ORDINANCE

That the City of Alpena Zoning Ordinance, Article 10 (Adoption and Amendments) is hereby amended to read as follows:

Section 10.2 Rezoning Standards

The Planning Commission shall review and apply the following standards and factors in the consideration of any rezoning request:

- A. Is the proposed rezoning consistent with goals and objectives of the current Comprehensive Plan?
- B. Are all of the allowable uses in the proposed district reasonably consistent with surrounding uses?
- C. Will there be an adverse physical impact on surrounding properties?
- D. Have there been changes in land use or other conditions in the immediate area or in the community in general which justify rezoning?
- E. Will rezoning create a deterrent to the improvement or development of adjacent property in accord with existing regulations?
- F. Will rezoning grant a special privilege to an individual property owner when contrasted with other property owners in the area or the general public (i.e. will rezoning result in spot zoning)?
- G. Is the site served by adequate public facilities or is the petitioner able to provide them?

Section 10.3 Conditional Rezoning

A. Intent.

It is recognized that there are certain instances where it would be in the best interests of the City, as well as advantageous to property owners seeking a change in zoning boundaries, if certain conditions could be proposed by property owners as part of a request for a rezoning. It is the intent of this Section to provide a process consistent with Section 405 of the **Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, 2006 PA 110**, as amended, by which an owner seeking a rezoning may voluntarily propose conditions regarding the use and/or development of land as part of the rezoning request.

FINDINGS OF FACT
REZONE REPORT

APPLICANT: RICHARD STEDMAN
PROPOSED USE: DUPLEX – 216 SOUTH 8TH AVE
DISTRICT: R-2
REVIEW DATE: 9/6/2022
REPORT: 22-Z-05

Summary of Request: Mr. Stedman requests to rezone 216 South 8th Ave from R-2 to R-T to provide housing for homeless veterans. Mr. Stedman is purchasing the property from the current owner via a Land Contract.



REZONING STANDARDS: SECTION 10.2

The Planning Commission shall review and apply the following standards and factors in the consideration of any rezoning request.

A. Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

A goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to allow suitable housing opportunities for all income levels, age groups, household types, and resident types (year-round/seasonal). The Future Land Use map incorporates Single (R-1, R-2) and Two-Family (R-T) Residential districts into the same zone (Single & Two Family Residential).

B. Consistency of Use in Proposed District with Surrounding Properties

Home is surrounded by R-2 district on two sides and the R-T district on two sides. Home is 1717 square feet. Old building permits from July 2003 and October 2003 state the District as R-T; assessing sketches of the home also states, “Two Family Residence” and “Deck & Stairs to 2nd Floor Apt” in the rear of the house. Prior to 2003 records, all permits showed R-2; all permits after 2003 also show R-2.

C. Adverse Physical Impact

There is one open violation in BS&A for Blight due to broken window, as well as missing and dilapidated siding. Previous violations existed for vegetation, snow removal, and building disrepair, but all have been closed. A duplex requires four parking spaces; four spaces would fit but would go all the way to the back fence line. Many properties in this surrounding neighborhood have room for only one vehicle; some have no driveway at all. The lot width is only 35’ wide. Current driveway is not impervious service. Recommendation of approval may be to pave driveway, but only for first two vehicle spaces nearest to street, as there may not be an immediate need for additional spaces. Recommendation for 933 Lockwood gave 18 months to complete paving.

D. Changes in Land Use to Immediate Area

The property adjacent to the northeast (212 South 8th Ave) was rezoned to R-T from R-2 in April of 2018.

E. Creation of a Deterrent

Suggested rezone will continue to be for residential housing and will not create a spot zone.

F. Special Privilege

Similar uses are currently taking place on the same block and across the street from the property in R-T zones; there are other surrounding properties that are non-conforming duplexes already.

G. Public Facilities

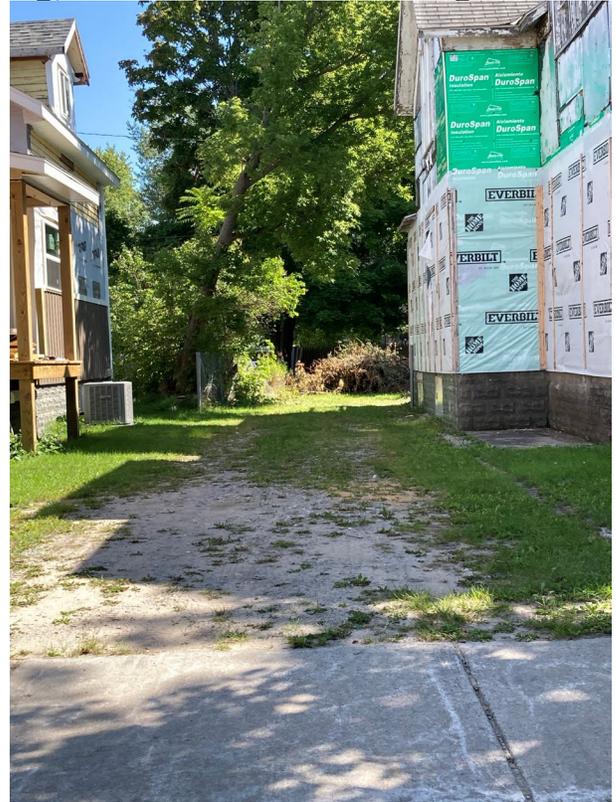
The lot is served by public facilities

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. Demo of the interior and cleanup of the exterior have begun; building permit for structure will be to conformance with single family home or duplex, pending approval of the rezone request.
2. If approved, building department staff will complete an inspection of both units; a Certificate of Occupancy would only be issued upon passing the inspections and will be reinspected every 3 years as is required by the Rental Registration Program.
3. Article in the newspaper about the property included for reference.
4. Objections received: None



Planning, Development, & Zoning





NORTH

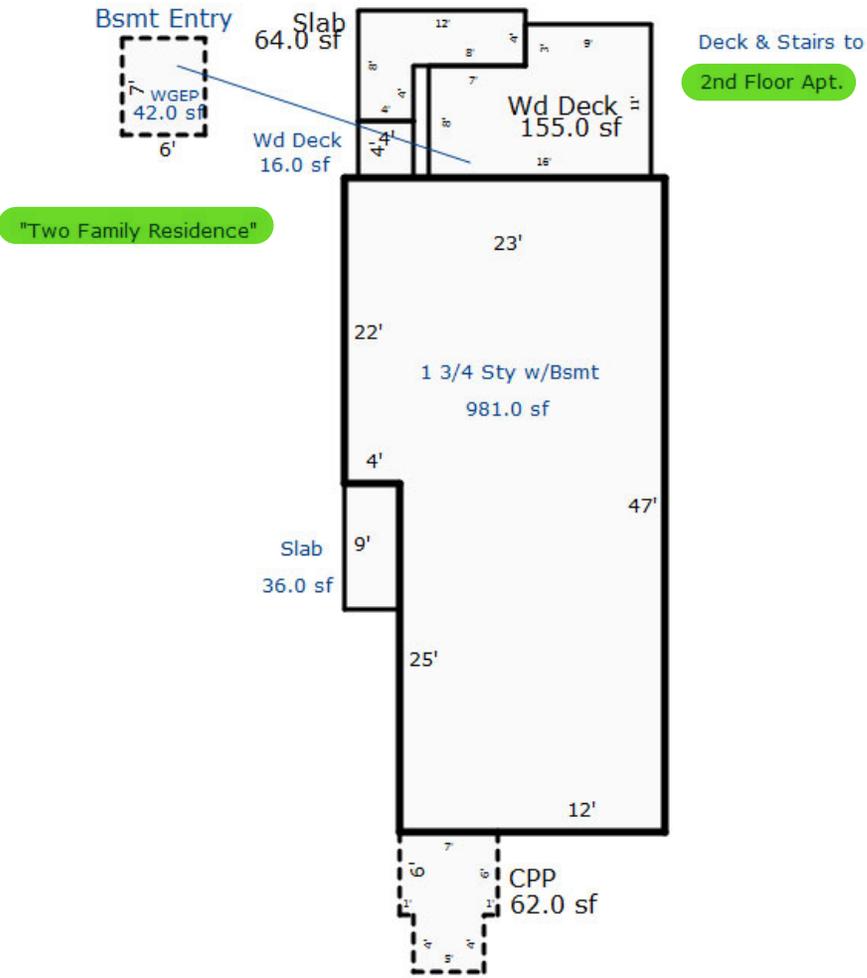


1" = 60'

093-637-000-413-00

Sketch by Apex Sketch

*** Information herein deemed reliable but not guaranteed***



Sketch by Apex Sketch

*** Information herein deemed reliable but not guaranteed***

Military volunteers build for Habitat, renovate veteran home

AUG 26, 2022

DARBY HINKLEY

News Lifestyles Editor

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Courtesy Photo Members of the 148th Fighter Wing out of Duluth, Minnesota, pose for a photo with other volunteers at the Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan ReStore in Alpena on Wednesday morning. Half the crew built ramps and railings at the ReStore, while the other half worked on prepping an Alpena house to be converted into lodging for homeless veterans.

ALPENA — Thirty military members incorporated volunteering into their visit to Alpena this week.

Members of the Air National Guard 148th Fighter Wing out of Duluth, Minnesota, worked with other volunteers at the Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan ReStore in Alpena on Wednesday morning. Half the crew built ramps and railings at the ReStore, while the other half worked on prepping an Alpena house to be converted into lodging for homeless veterans.

The military members came to Alpena to run annual training exercises at the Combat Readiness Training Center, but they wanted to support the community while they were here as well.

“They reached out to me,” said Jennifer Nestell, homeownership coordinator for Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan. “And said they’d like to do some volunteering.”

She explained what they were doing at the ReStore.



News Photo by Darby Darby Hinkley Above, some of the visiting military volunteers at Alpena's Habitat for Humanity ReStore construct a railing for a wheelchair ramp on Wednesday. Hinkley

“They are working on two wheelchair ramps, they’re assembling, to be installed shortly,” Nestell said. “Once we get the assembly done here, we will install them at the homeowners’ homes.”

She was amazed with their willingness to help, especially with hard labor and heavy lifting.

“This is so awesome,” Nestell added. “These guys and gals are awesome. It’s fantastic. They were very eager, and they just jumped right in.”

Nestell expressed appreciation to Thrivent Financial and the Thrivent Action Team for donating a gift card for food for the visiting military volunteers, and to Pepsi for donating drinks for the volunteers.

Military volunteers at the Habitat ReStore talked about why they volunteer.



News Photo by Darby Hinkley Above, some of the visiting military volunteers gather at lunchtime on Wednesday after a morning of hard work starting the process of converting a single-family home into lodging for homeless veterans.

“For our unit, it’s part of giving back to the community,” said Marshall Talley, Senior Airman in the 148th Fighter Wing Security Forces Squadron. “We like to help out.”

He added that they volunteer for community events in Duluth on a regular basis.

“It just shows support for the community, because community is such a big support for the base,” added Talley, who is originally from Ypsilanti, Michigan.

“We do a lot of different community outreach programs,” said Staff Sergeant E5 Ricky Schiff. “We like giving back to the community, and making a firsthand impact.”

“Just making a difference,” added Airman First Class E3 Armando Barrios.

Military men who were volunteering at the veteran home site explained their task.

Master Sergeant Ben Nyen is the 148th Fighter Wing Security Forces Squadron training manager.

“On this site here, we’re doing deconstruction of a house,” Nyen said. “It’s going to be turned into a duplex for homeless veterans.”

“We’ve been taking out full walls, floors, ceilings,” said First Sergeant Kelly Jones. “We’ve been basically gutting the entire house.”

Just before noon on Wednesday, they had already filled a commercial dumpster, and the garbage truck was backing in for them to load it up again.

“These guys are super motivated,” Jones added. “We’ve got a great crew. Super energetic, ready to work. They’ve been working really hard since about 8:30 this morning.”

Nyen added that they like to fit volunteering into their training trips all over the U.S. and even in other countries.

“We’re just here for the day,” Nyen said. “We usually like to take a day to do something in the community.”

Richard Stedman owns the house that is being renovated. A disabled veteran himself, he wanted to do what he could for homeless veterans.

“We’re doing the renovation, we’re trying to create homeless veteran housing,” Stedman said. “For intermediate, so if they end up homeless, or they’re coming back from the war, or overseas, and they find themselves without a place to go, we can get them into the program.”

Stedman explained that if they get accepted into the program, the government takes over the house and controls rent.

“People are able to live here six months to a year for free, in order to take that time to get back on their feet,” Stedman said.

He and his wife Yuliana Stedman are from Pennsylvania. They are co-owners of the trucking company, Regional Valley Logistics, LLC. They decided to take the profits from their business to purchase two properties to help homeless veterans – one in Alpena and another in Valley View, Pennsylvania.

They also gutted and renovated another home that they previously owned on Long Rapids Road in Lachine. It is a three-bedroom house, completed in October 2021. He said they have it rented at a reduced rate of \$600 per month to a disabled veteran and his family. That veteran graduated from the Support Services for Veteran Families program.

The Stedmans bought the current Alpena property from Allen Krey of Krey’s Construction, who worked with them on the price and allowed them to purchase the property on a land contract in support of their mission to help homeless veterans.

The Stedmans plan to add two more homes over the next three years.

Richard Stedman explained why they are doing these projects, adding that his wife is the strongest supporter of veterans that he knows.

“Honestly, it’s a simple thing,” he said in a text message. “If a veteran has a home for his wife and kids, he can feel pride in that, that pride can grow,” and he will be less likely to die by suicide.

“Every day I go to sleep and, on average, when I wake up, 22 of the best our country has, decided they had no other option and took their own life,” he continued. “This is what my wife and I can do to try and help.”

If you are a veteran, family member or friend of a veteran in crisis, help is available 24 hours a day by calling 988 and pressing 1. You can also text 838255.

Reach Darby Hinkley at dhinkley@thealpenanews.com, or call 989-358-5691.

ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES

- August 31st – in person review with Denise Cline
- September 12th – received review of Articles 1 & 2 from Denise – in process of reviewing
- Ordinance will be reviewed by Article.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION WITH PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL:

Housing

- Thoughts on opening up R1 and/or R2 district to two-family units?
 - Master Plan Future Land Use map combines all single family and two family into one district
- Thoughts on housing size/lot minimums/lot coverage?
 - Current Minimum Lot Size: R1: 9600 sq ft (80 x 120); R2: 8,400 sq ft (70 x 120)
 - Minimum dwelling unit size: 960 sq ft of livable space (excludes bathrooms, closets, laundry areas).
 - Maximum Lot Coverage: R1: 30%; R2: 35%
 - Use setbacks only?
 - Most Common Lot Size: R1: 75x132 (9,900), R2: 66x140 (9,240)
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – already allowed, but maybe need to be advertised more – tax implications to the homeowner
- Housing Types
 - Current Zoning Ordinance allows for detached single family homes or detached single-family condominiums if in a condominium subdivision in R1 and R2 districts – opportunities to open up other forms. Examples include: townhomes, two-family units, attached condominiums, bungalow/cottage courtyards.
 - May be an opportunity to inject light form-based codes in the residential zones to protect neighborhood character (Example: Grand Rapids defines their residential zones by a “Neighborhood Pattern Work Book,” which identifies Grand Rapids neighborhoods by the era in which they were primarily developed: Turn of the century, early 20th century, post-World War II, and late 20th century. (<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/a-decade-without-single-family-residential-zoning-in-grand-rapids>))
- Manufactured homes (mobile homes) and Tiny Homes
 - Are tiny homes out of place on a regular lot?
 - How tiny, is tiny? Generally designated as being under 600 square feet, however average size of tiny homes for sale are just 225 square feet.

Short Term Rentals

- Have received complaints from residents who live next door to current STRs about frequency of neighbors changing and that it’s a commercial use of a property
- Impact to lack of Housing
- Many articles exist discussing how STRs have changed communities and blocks
- Allow in a secondary dwelling if owner occupied in principal building? Both long term and short term?
- Treat as a commercial property? Where to allow?
- Other communities are:
 - allowing a specific percentage or number of units to be STRs;
 - don’t allow them at all;
 - licensed based on application requirements
 - lottery systems with max number of units
 - Only allowing in business/commercial districts

- Create an overlay of where they would be allowed
- <https://www.bridgemi.com/business-watch/michigan-voted-block-airbnb-bans-hits-roadblock-over-local-control>
- <https://granicus.com/blog/six-ways-that-short-term-vacation-rentals-are-impacting-communities/>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45083954>
- <https://www.summitdaily.com/news/a-majority-of-survey-responses-claim-short-term-rentals-negatively-impact-summit-countys-community/>

Parking

- Commercial
 - Find alternative requirements for parking based on business need – owner/tenant decides
 - Utilize parking minimums and/or maximums
- Residential
 - Off street parking requirements
 - Parking in the Right of Way (area between sidewalk and curb)
 - Overnight parking / Odd-Even and One-Sided Seasonal or Year Round Parking
 - <https://www.cityofgrandledge.com/386/Odd-Even-Seasonal-Parking>

How should members of a public body handle the approval of meeting minutes if they were absent?

Tyler Augst, [Michigan State University Extension](#) - April 8, 2022

What should members of a public body do when it comes time to vote to approve minutes of a meeting that they were not present at?

In a perfect world, members of a public body would have perfect attendance at meetings, but that is not the case. [Michigan State University \(MSU\) Extension](#) recognizes that not being present for all or part of a previous meeting can happen for a variety of reasons, such as removing oneself due to a conflict of interest, being a new member on the board or life getting in the way as it does with all things. A question that then comes up for the absent member is what to do at the next meeting when a motion is made to approve the meeting minutes.

Members often report feeling that since they were not present at the meeting, they lack the first-hand knowledge of the proceedings to approve the minutes. Those members may feel they need to either vote 'no' or abstain from the vote to approve the minutes. In truth, neither of these is the appropriate route when considering state statute and Roberts Rules of Order, the commonly used parliamentary procedure. "[Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition](#) (RONR)," by Henry Martyn Robert, explains that "it should be noted that a member's absence from the meeting for which minutes are being approved does not prevent the member from participating in their correction or approval."



Photo by Werner Pfennig from Pexels.com.

Open Meetings Act on minutes

Michigan's Open Meetings Act requires that all public bodies must keep minutes of their meetings. Those minutes are the record of the meetings showing things like date, time, and location of the meeting, member present and absent, and decisions made (MCL15.269(1)). The Open Meetings Act also states that “[t]he public body shall make any corrections in the minutes at the next meeting after the meeting to which the minutes refer” (MCL 15.269(1)).

In addition to the Open Meetings Act, other state statutes or local policies may have an impact on what meeting minutes look like for a particular body and who is responsible for them. Members of public bodies are encouraged to reference the applicable state laws and their local bylaws or rules of procedure for additional information.

What should an absent member do?

The Open Meetings Act is silent on the approval process for the minutes of public bodies, so what should a member of a public body do after an absence? In addition to statutes, members can look to their body's adopted parliamentary procedure for guidance on the process of approving meeting minutes. For example, many communities have chosen to use "[Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition](#)" as their parliamentary authority. In the absence of guidance from statute or local policies and bylaws, the chosen parliamentary procedure will guide this process. Under RONR, during the meeting following the absence, members should fully participate in the discussion of the minutes and any corrections, even if they were absent.

As Ann Macfarlane explains in her article, "[Approving minutes if you were absent](#)," voting to approve the minutes is not you affirming you were an eyewitness to the events, but rather your confidence in the secretary, the other members, and the process that produced the minutes. Members should not abstain from the process. In fact, you should participate in the discussion, any corrections, and the approval.

If a member was not present for a meeting, the immediate next steps after the missed meeting are very similar to what members who were present would do. The absent member should have still completed their [preparation work for the meeting they missed](#) (reading the meeting packet, reviewing any relevant documents, etc.) so they will still have an understanding of what was discussed. If a member truly has concerns with the minutes, they may make a motion to refer the minutes to committee or postpone approval until a certain time to allow for investigation or redrafting.

For members of an appointed body, such as a planning commission or zoning board of appeals (ZBA), the times when it is appropriate to abstain from a vote are limited. When someone takes on the role like that of a planning commission or ZBA member, it is with the expectation that individual will be an active participant in the deliberations

and decisions of the body, as long as there is no conflict of interest. Members of elected bodies must also avoid conflicts of interest, but may have more ability to abstain during votes. [This article](#) contains more information on conflicts of interest, including how they may vary for different bodies.

Do meeting minutes even need to be voted on?

Assuming a body has adopted RONR (12th ed.) as their parliamentary authority, section 41 deals with the order of business at a meeting, including the approval of minutes (41:9-12). The process is as follows:

1. The minutes are read, or it is announced that copies of proposed minutes have been distributed
2. A formal motion to approve the minutes may be offered, but is not required
3. The chair asks for any corrections to the minutes
4. Corrections are proposed and are resolved via unanimous consent or if there are objections a motion to amend can be made and resolved
5. Once all corrections, if there were any, are dealt with the chair states that the minutes are approved as read or approved as corrected

To quote directly from “Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th ed.” (41:11): “The minutes are thus approved without any formal vote, even if a motion for their approval has been made. The only proper way to object to the approval of the secretary’s draft of the minutes is to offer a correction to it.”

More resources on meeting minutes

State statutes, local charters, bylaws, and rules of procedure are a great source of information on how your local community has chosen to handle the record keeping process, member absences, and many other things. As this article explains, any specific rules or procedures in those bylaws and rules of procedure would take precedence over the rules established by the chosen parliamentary procedures, and state statutes would take precedence over local rules and policies. Additional resources on meeting minutes are provided below:

- [Meeting minutes made easy: Part 1](#)
- [Meeting minutes made easy: Part 2](#)
- [Suggestions for keeping an accurate history of your organization](#)
- [Michigan's Open Meetings Act: Explore the details](#)

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